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OR

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BY
Rev. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

ISAIAH VOL III

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ISAIAH.

CHAPTER L.

Vers. 1–3. Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?—*Jehovah and unfaithful Israel:*—These Israelites went to the only kind of law with which they were familiar, and borrowed from it two of its forms, which were not only suggested to them by the relations in which the nation and the nation's sons respectively stood to Jehovah, as wife and as children, but admirably illustrated the ideas they wished to express. (1) There was the form of divorce, so expressive of the ideas of absoluteness, deliberateness and finality—of absoluteness, for throughout the East power of divorce rests entirely with the husband; of deliberateness, for in order to prevent hasty divorce the Hebrew law insisted that the husband must make a bill or writing of divorce instead of only speaking dismissal; and of finality, for such a writing in contrast to the spoken dismissal, set the divorce beyond recall. (2) The other form which the doubters borrowed from their law, was one which, while it also illustrated the irrevocableness of the act, emphasized the helplessness of the agent—the act of the father who put his children away, not as the husband put his wife in his anger, but in his necessity, selling them to pay his debts and because he was bankrupt. (3) On such doubts God turns with their own language—"I have indeed put your mother away, but where is the bill that makes her divorce final, beyond recall? You indeed were sold, but was it because I was bankrupt? To which, then, of My creditors (note the scorn of the plural) was it that I sold you? Nay, by means of your iniquities did ye sell yourselves, and by means of your transgressions were ye put away. But I stand here, ready as ever to save, I alone. If there is any difficulty about your restoration it lies in this, that I am alone, with no response or assistance from men." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The sinner's responsibility:*—I. THE SINNER'S MISERABLE CONDITION. 1. Separated from God. 2. Sold under sin. II. THE OCCASION OF IT. Not the will of God, but his own love of sin, and his consequent disregard of God's offers of deliverance from sin and sorrow. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *Israel self-ruined:*—Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be severely dealt with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon Him, as if He had severely dealt with them. But in answer to their murmurings, we have here—I. A CHALLENGE TO PRODUCE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE QUARREL BEGAN ON GOD'S SIDE (ver. 1). II. A CHARGE THAT THEY WERE THEMSELVES THE AUTHOR OF THEIR RUIN. "Behold, for your iniquities," etc. III. A CONFIRMATION OF THIS CHALLENGE AND THIS CHARGE (vers. 2, 3). 1. It was plain that it was their own fault that they were cast off, for God came and offered them His helping hand, either to prevent their trouble or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted Him and all the tenders of His grace. 2. It was plain that it was not owing to any lack of power in God that they were led into the misery of captivity, and remained in it, for He is almighty. They lacked faith in Him, and so that power was not exerted on their behalf. So it is with sinners still. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 2–6. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?—*The Mediator: Divine and human:*—These words could have been spoken only by the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They place before our thoughts—I. His

DIVINE POWER AND GLORY. Power is naturally calm. The power that sustains the universe is, in fact, most wonderful when, unseen, unfelt, with its Divine silence and infinite ease, it moves on in its ordinary course; but we are often most impressed by it when it strikes against obstructions, and startles the senses by its violence. Knowing our frame, and dealing with us as with children, our Teacher seeks to impress us with a sense of His Divine power, by bidding us think of Him as working by inexorable force certain awful changes and displacements in nature. "I dry up the sea," etc. II. HIS HUMAN LIFE AND EDUCATION. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned," etc. Gradually, it seems, the Divine Spirit, like a mysterious voice, woke up within Him the consciousness of what He was, and of what He had come on earth to fulfil. Morning by morning, through all the days of His childhood, the voice was ever awakening Him to higher consciousness and more awful knowledge. III. THE MEDIATORIAL TEACHING FOR WHICH HE HAD BEEN THUS PREPARED. 1. It is personal. If His own personal teaching had not been in view, there would have been no need for all this personal preparation. "The Lord hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak." This is His own testimony to the great fact that He Himself personally teaches every soul that is saved. 2. It is suitable. Suitable to our weariness. (1) While we are yet in a state of unregeneracy. (2) When we are sinking under the burden of guilt. (3) When fainting under the burden of care. (4) When burdened under the intellectual mysteries of theology. (5) When under the burden of mortal infirmity. 3. The teaching of Christ is minutely direct and particular. When I read that He is ordained to speak "to him" that is weary, I understand that He does not speak in a general, impersonal, unrecognizing way to the forlorn crowd of sufferers, but to every man in particular, and to every man apart. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*)

The Redeemer described by Himself:—In my opinion, these verses (2–6) run on without any break, so that you are not to separate them, and ascribe one to the prophet, another to the Messiah, and another to Jehovah Himself; but you must take the whole as the utterance of one Divine Person. That Jehovah-Jesus is the One who is speaking here, is very clear from the last verse of the previous chapter: "I the Lord" ("I, Jehovah," it is,) "am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." I. BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS GOD. Link vers. 3 and 6: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. . . . I gave my back to the smiters," etc. He, then, who suffered thus, and whom we regard as redeeming us by His death, and as saving us by His life, is no less than the Almighty God. I think the first reference, in these words, is to the miracles which were wrought by the plagues in Egypt. It was Jehovah-Jesus who was then plaguing His adversaries. In a later chapter, Isaiah says that "the Angel of His presence saved them;" and who is that great "Angel of His presence" but the Angel of the covenant in whom we delight, even Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour? But we must not restrict the text to that which happened in the land of Egypt, for it has a far wider reference. All the great wonders of nature are to be ascribed to Him upon whom we build all our hopes for time and for eternity. The last miracle recorded here, namely, that of covering the heavens with sackcloth, was performed by our Lord even when He was in His death agony. You are not depending for your salvation upon a mere man. He is man, but He is just as truly Divine. II. BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE INSTRUCTED TEACHER (ver. 4). I call your special attention to the condescension of our Lord in coming here on purpose to care for the weak—to speak consoling and sustaining words to them; and also to the fact that, before He performed that service, He learned the sacred art from His Father. For thirty years was He learning much in Joseph's carpenter's shop. Little do we know how much He learned there; but this much we do know, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." And afterwards, when He entered upon His public work among men, He spake with the tongue of the learned, saying to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." All through His time of teaching, He was still listening and learning. III. BEHOLD JESUS CHRIST AS THE SERVANT OF THE LORD (ver. 5). 1. He speaks of Himself as being prepared by grace. "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear," as if there had been a work wrought upon Him to prepare Him for His service. And the same Spirit, which rested upon Christ, must also open our ears. 2. Being thus prepared by grace, He was consecrated in due form, so that He could say to Himself, "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear." He heard the faintest whispers of His Father's voice. 3. He not only heard His Father's voice, but He was obedient to it in all things. "I was not rebellious." From the day when, as a child, He said to His

parents, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" till the hour when, on the cross, He cried, "It is finished," He was always obedient to the will of God. 4. In that obedience, He was persevering through all trials. He says that He did not turn away back. Having commenced the work of saving men, He went through with it. IV. BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE PEERLESS SUFFERER (ver. 6). It has been asked, "Did God really die?" No; for God cannot die, yet He who died was God; so, if there be a confusion in your mind, it is the confusion of Holy Scripture itself, for we read, "Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." In addition to the pain, we are asked, in this verse, to notice particularly the contempt which the Saviour endured. The plucking of His hair was a proof of the malicious contempt of His enemies, yet they went still further, and did spit in His face. Spitting was regarded by Orientals, and, I suppose, by all of us, as the most contemptuous thing which one man could do to another; yet the vile soldiers gathered round Him, and spat upon Him. I must point out the beautiful touch of voluntariness here: "I hid not my face." Our Saviour did not turn away, or seek to escape. If He had wished to do so, He could readily have done it. Conclusion: Notice three combinations which the verses of my text will make. (1) Verses 2 and 6. Those verses together show the full ability of Christ to save. Here we have God and the Sufferer. (2) Verses 4 and 5. Here you have the Teacher and the Servant, and the two together make up this truth—that Christ teaches us, not with words only, but with His life. What a wonderful Teacher He is, who Himself learned the lessons which He would have us learn! (3) Now put the whole text together, and I think the result will be—at least to God's people—that they will say, "This God shall be our God for ever and ever; and it shall be our delight to do His bidding at all times." It is a high honour to serve God; and Christ is God. It is a great thing to be the servant of a wise teacher; and Christ has the tongue of the learned. It is a very sweet thing to walk in the steps of a perfect Exemplar; and Christ is that. And, last and best of all, it is delightful to live for Him who suffered and died on our behalf. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 4–11. **The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned.**—*The Lord's servant made perfect through sufferings:*—In vers. 4–9 the servant is again introduced, speaking of Himself and His work, as in chap. xlix. 1–6. He describes—1. The close, intimate, and continuous communion with God through which He has learned the ministry of comfort by the Divine word, and His own complete self-surrender to the voice that guides Him (vers. 4, 5). 2. His acceptance of the persecution and obloquy which He had to encounter in the discharge of His commission (ver. 6). 3. His unwavering confidence in the help of Jehovah, and the victory of His righteous cause, and the discomfiture of all His enemies (vers. 7–9). Vers. 10, 11 are an appendix to the preceding description, drawing lessons for the encouragement of believers (ver. 10) or the warning of unbelievers (ver. 11). Although the word "Servant" never occurs in this passage, its resemblance to the three other "Servant-passages" makes it certain that the speaker is none other than the ideal character who comes before us in chaps. xlii. 1–4, xlix. 1–6, and lii. 13–liii. 15. The passage, indeed, forms an almost indispensable link of connection between the first two and the last of these. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The Messiah an instructed Teacher:*—After the Messiah had been exhibited in the preceding discourse labouring in vain and spending His strength for nought among the Jews, despised of men and abhorred by the nations, when actually employed in His public ministry, it became necessary to explain this surprising phenomenon. It is, therefore, affirmed that the neglect and contempt which He suffered was not owing to any deficiency on the part of this celebrated Teacher, who was eminently qualified for acquainting men with the Will of God, in the knowledge of which He was perfectly instructed. This important qualification was not imparted to Him by any human teacher, neither did He acquire it in the schools of philosophers and orators, nor was it communicated to Him by the most eminent of the prophets, but by the Spirit of the Lord God, to whom it is here attributed. (*R. Macculloch.*) *The tongue of the learned:*—I. THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED AS NEEDING THE SAVIOUR'S GRACE. "Him that is weary." This description includes a very large class. All may not ascribe their weariness to the same cause, nor may all be sensible of their weariness to the same extent. Yet all are weary. 1. Not in the world of sense only do you complain of weariness. It is impossible for the unrenewed heart to find rest even in things that are Spiritual. Heaven itself would to such a one cease to be heaven. What a weariness do you find in the religion of Jesus Christ! Of prayer, of public

worship, of hearing sermons, of religious conversation, of the service and work of the Lord you say, "What a weariness!" 2. The description, certainly, includes those who are truly anxious about the salvation of their souls. 3. The Lord's weary ones include His own quickened people, who feel the burden of the body of sin, and are cast down because of their difficulties. 4. The assaults of the adversary, too, contribute not a little to the sense of weariness, which often prostrate a child of God. 5. Add to these the numerous and varied trials and afflictions which beset his pathway to heaven, and you have in outline the picture of his case. II. CHRIST'S QUALIFICATIONS TO MEET THE CASE OF SUCH. 1. His participation of our nature. Absolute Godhead could not of itself have conveyed to us sinners one word of sympathy or comfort. Neither could the angels do it. They are total strangers to the weariness to which sinful children of men are heirs. But, the man Christ Jesus becomes a partaker of the very nature whose burdens He sought to relieve. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also took part in the same." 2. As He thus took upon Him our nature, so He also endured our sinless though humbling infirmities. 3. In addition to all this, the Lord God had given Him the tongue of the learned in another sense. I refer to the communication of the Divine Spirit (Isaiah lxi. 1). Never was there a tongue like Christ's—so learned, so skilled, so practised, and so experienced. "Never man spake like this man." 4. The purpose for which this tongue of the learned was given Him is thus described—"That He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." (1) A word, (2) a word in season, (3) that He should know how to speak. 5. But when Christ speaks to the weary, it is not to the outward ear merely, but to the heart—with almighty power. And the result is rest. III. THE REST WHICH JESUS IMPARTS, when He speaks the word in season. 1. We are seeking rest by nature everywhere, and in everything but in Jesus. We seek it in the outward world, in the moral world, in the religious world—and we find it not. We seek it in conviction, in ordinances, in doing the works of the law—and still it evades us. We go from place to place, and from means to means, and still the burden presses, and we find no rest. No, and never will, until it is sought and found in Jesus. 2. Yet, in the case of a tried believer, the rest that Jesus imparts does not always imply the removal of the burden from which the sense of weariness proceeds. The burden is permitted to remain, and yet rest is experienced. Wonderful indeed! How is it explained? That burden takes us to Jesus. He pours strength into our souls, life into our spirits, and love into our hearts, and so we find rest. It is also matter of much practical importance, that you take heed not to anticipate or forestall His promised grace. For every possible emergency in which you can be placed, the fulness of Christ and the supplies of the Covenant are provided. But that provision is only meted out as the necessity for which it was intended occurs. 3. There is an hour approaching—the last great crisis of human life—when we shall all, more than ever, need Him who hath the "tongue of the learned." It will be of all seasons the most trying and solemn—the season that separates the soul from the body, and ushers the immortal spirit into eternity. Is it not our highest wisdom to know this Saviour now? (*C. Ross, M.A.*) *A word to the weary*:—I. THE POWER OF SPEAKING TO THE WEARY IS NOTHING LESS THAN A DIVINE GIFT. We may say the right word in a wrong tone. II. Though the gift itself is Divine, IT IS TO BE EXERCISED SEASONABLY. It is not enough to speak the right word, it must be spoken at the right moment. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ speaking a word in season to the weary*:—I. CONSIDER THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF THOSE THAT ARE WEARY. II. SHOW, FROM THE CHARACTER AND PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT HE IS A SEASONABLE AND ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR TO THOSE WHO ARE WEARY. The excellency and glory of Christ may not only be perceived by viewing Him in the whole of His mediatorial character; but, also, by fixing on specific parts of it, and showing that there is a Divine suitability to all the exigencies of ruined men. 1. He can give rest to the mind of the man who is wearied with his researches after human wisdom. 2. He can give rest to those who are oppressed under a sense of guilt. 3. He can speak a word in season to those who have wearied themselves in attempting to establish their own righteousness. 4. He can give rest to those who have wearied themselves in vainly trying to overcome their corruptions in their own strength. 5. He can speak a word in season to those who are weary with the weight of affliction and trouble. 6. He can give rest to those who are oppressed and wearied with the cares of this world. 7. Christ can speak a word in season to those who are weary of living in this world. None of the children of men can enjoy rest, or real peace of mind, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (*J. Matheson.*) *The*

ministry of preaching (with Acts xx. 27). The first passage is spoken by the Messiah, the second by St. Paul. The one looks forward, the other backward. The one speaks of a preparation and fitness for a work yet to be done; the other is a thankful record of a mission already faithfully accomplished. I. IN THE FIRST PASSAGE YOU HAVE THE CHIEF MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ANTICIPATING HIS WORK OF TEACHING AND ANNOUNCING HIS FITNESS FOR THE WORK. 1. Observe the gift with which He claims to be endowed as one element of special fitness for His ministry. Speech was the chief instrument employed by Christ for conveying truth to the minds of men. The dispensation under which we live, so emphatically designated the dispensation of the Spirit, was ushered in by two miracles, both of which related to the tongue. The Holy Spirit Himself appeared resting upon each one in the form of cloven tongues as of fire. A second miracle was wrought on the uneducated Galilean apostles, enabling them, without learning, to speak intelligently in the dialects of all the nationalities present, so that every man heard them speak in his own language. And why, at the very founding of Christianity, was this twofold miracle wrought in relation to the tongue, if not to indicate that the Holy Spirit purposed to employ speech as the chief instrument in the regeneration of mankind? 2. The purpose for which this gift of speech is to be employed. "To speak a word in season to him that is weary." (1) You will have to speak to men suffering from mental weariness —men who have long searched for truth and failed to find it. See that ye be well furnished with the Spirit, who has promised to guide you into all truth, and who also will help you to guide others into all truth. (2) You will have others wearied in body, through excessive labour or sore affliction. You may tell them of the illustrious Sufferer of Calvary who, though innocent, suffered for our sins; was in all points tempted like as we are; and who, therefore, is able to succour all those who are tempted. (3) You will have others wearied in heart, by reason of bereavement. Imitating the Great Teacher in the bereaved family of Bethany, you must direct the thought of the sorrowful to the resurrection power of Christ, when the mortal shall put on immortality, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption. (4) Others will come to you weary of the vicissitudes, disappointments and reverses of life. With the Master, you may speak to them of the lily, the sparrow, the grass, the flower of the field; how your Heavenly Father careth for these, but how much more He will care for those who have faith in and love towards Him, even to the numbering of every hair on the whitening brow. (5) Others will come with weary consciences, burdened with sin, fearing the wrath to come, carrying with them, it may be, the dread secret of undiscovered and unconfessed crime. Take solemn heed that the word you speak is a word in season. Do not heal lightly the wounds thus made by the Spirit. Do not attempt to soothe the agony by minifying the guilt, or lessening the condemnation, or diminishing the penalty. Do what the Spirit does. Take of the things of Christ and show them unto the penitent; show them in their preciousness, their efficacy, and their all-sufficiency. (6) Others may come to you weary of inbred sin. Open your ear to hear what the Lord your God will say unto you; humbly wait with an upward look to your Great Teacher, and He will give you the tongue of the learned. 3. This learning claimed by the Redeemer is set forth as progressive. "He wakeneth Me morning by morning. He wakeneth mine ear that I may hear as disciples do." If our Lord found it necessary to place Himself in the position of a pupil to receive daily instruction from the Divine Father, how much greater need is there for you who are His ministers? You cannot learn in one lesson all that the Holy Spirit has to communicate. Cultivate a sensibility of soul, a readiness to hear the softest, gentlest tone of God, whether in nature, in providence, in history, in the inspired word, or in the deep secrets of your own heart. II. THE NOBLE TESTIMONY OF THE NOBLEST APOSTLE AT THE CLOSE OF HIS MINISTRY AT EPHESUS. (*R. Roberts.*) *The weary world and the refreshing ministry:*—I. THE WEARY WORLD. It is not one man that is weary, the generation is weary, the world is weary. All sinners are weary. Wearied with fruitless efforts after happiness. There is the *ennui* yawn, and the groan of depression heard everywhere. II. THE REFRESHING MINISTRY. "The Lord God hath given me," etc. 1. The relief comes by speech. No physical, legislative, or ceremonial means will do; it must be by the living voice, charged with sympathy, truth, light. 2. The effective speech comes from God. "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned." No man can speak the soul-refreshing thing unless God inspires and teaches him. 3. The speech that comes from God is a "word in season." It is exactly suited to the mood of the souls addressed. (*Homilist.*) ***A word in season to the weary*** (with Matt. xi. 28-30):—I. We may name

WOUNDED AFFECTIONS as a very frequent cause of weariness. We do not know, until the blow comes, how heavily we have been leaning on the staff of friendly sympathy. Breaking beneath our weight, it leaves us tottering and weary. But amidst all our heart-troubles the voice of the Saviour is heard saying, "Rest! Come unto Me and I will give you rest." II. THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF OUR DESIRES is another common antecedent of lassitude. All of us are furnished with larger appetites than we have ability or opportunity for satisfying. Pleasure! Money! Power! Reputation! How seldom do men know when they have enough of that which they most desire. So, as the material of sensuous enjoyment becomes exhausted, the sense of emptiness becomes more painful. But in this mood, too, we are met by the Divine Saviour: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." For Christ would fill the soul with the only object of desire that cannot disappear in its grasp: with the Eternal Himself. III. VACANCY OF MIND AND THE SENSE OF MONOTONY is another common cause of weariness. "Nature abhors a vacuum," as the old philosophers said. The mind cannot endure its own emptiness. It is so constituted that it must have change and variety of impressions and ideas; otherwise it turns upon itself, and its fine mechanism is worn down with useless friction. But He who comes to reveal the Father meets us, too, in this mood of self-weariness. It is His message to tell us of a new self which it is the will of God to impart to us; a new heart in which it may please God to dwell, and with which He can hold fellowship. The man who yields himself to the Spirit, and is born of the Spirit, need no longer be disgusted with himself, having found his nature anew in God. IV. But the load of A GUILTY CONSCIENCE is even more fatiguing than that of a vacant mind. Need it be pointed out how profoundly Christ meets this guilty dejection of the human heart? V. Quite a different cause of weariness is to be found in THE BURDEN OF EARNEST THOUGHT AND NOBLE ENDEAVOUR. For the Christian, it is enough that his Saviour has "suffered in the flesh"—has borne "the weary weight of all this unintelligible world" in uncomplaining meekness. He is to "arm himself likewise with the same mind." (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Noble gifts for lowly uses:*—I. GOD'S HIGHEST GIFTS HAVE THEIR DEFINITE END AND PURPOSE. In Nature, for instance, nothing has been created in vain. And so it ought to be in human life, that world of feeling and desire within the breast of man. You see that the prophet looked upon the tongue of the learned as a gift from God, holding it in trust, where many would have counted it as their own. And he saw it was a gift for very plain and apparent purposes—for men are stewards, and not owners of all that is bestowed upon them. This splendid administrative genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, dominant and even imperious, but only because it has seen into the heart of purposes working themselves out in the midst of the ages, the wealth it has acquired, the influence it commands, has this no meaning in the economy of nations? You only need the touch of Christ to consecrate it and turn it into right channels, and the whole world is blessed thereby. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." II. THIS DEFINITE PURPOSE IS A VERY SIMPLE ONE, AND POSSIBLY AT FIRST SIGHT INSUFFICIENT. Ambition would say so, and ambition is as natural to the human heart as desire itself. We ask great things, we would be great things, we would do them. It must be confessed, however, that no sin of man has been more constant and apparent than that which has made men look down upon these lowly uses belonging unto lofty gifts. A proud reserve has been considered in all ages as appropriate to commanding talents. The statesman's wisdom, the orator's art, the poet's fire, what are they side by side with all that wondrous wealth lavished upon simple fishermen in Galilee, and carried into the home of Lazarus, and spent among the humble poor. Between the highest born among men and the humblest service henceforward there can be no disparity. "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet," He said to His disciples, "ye ought also to wash one another's feet." And as with individuals, so with nations. God gives special gifts for His own purposes. III. THIS PURPOSE IS A VERY URGENT AND APPROPRIATE ONE. After all, the end is not beneath the means. It needs the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary, that word fitly spoken which dries the tear from the eye, and banishes sorrow from the heart. To do away with pain and assuage grief, is not that a noble, a Divine thing? And will you see how Christianity has been doing this in lower and yet very important directions, permeating society by its subtle influences for good? And more when you understand Isaiah's words in their true and spiritual significance, what a field of usefulness unfolds itself! For the great burdens of mankind are not physical, but mental and spiritual. (*W. Baxendale.*) *Words in season for*

the weary:—I. THE EDUCATION OF THE DIVINE SERVANT. We must notice the difference between the authorized version and the new. In the one, "the Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know." In the other, "of them that are taught"—or, as the margin reads, "of disciples." The thought being that the Lord Jesus in His human life was a pupil in the school of human pain, under the tutelage of His Father. 1. His education was by God Himself. 2. It was various. He passed through each class in the school of weariness. 3. It was constant. "Morning by morning" the Father woke Him. 4. It dealt with the season for administering comfort. "That I should know how to speak a word in season." There are times when the nervous system is so overstrained that it cannot bear even the softest words. It is best then to be silent. A caress, a touch, or the stillness that breathes an atmosphere of calm, will then most quickly soothe and heal. This delicacy of perception can only be acquired in the school of suffering. 5. It embraced the method. "That I should know how." The manner is as important as the season. A message of good-will may be uttered with so little sympathy, and in tones so gruff and grating, that it will repel. The touch of the comforter must be that of the nurse on the fractured bone—of the mother with the frightened child. II. HIS RESOLUTION. From the first, Jesus knew that He must die. The Lord God poured the full story into His opened ear. With all other men, death is the close of their life; with Christ it was the object. We die because we were born; Christ was born that He might die. On one occasion, towards the close of His earthly career, when the fingers on the dial-plate were pointing to the near fulfilment of the time, we are told He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. What heroism was here! Men sometimes speak of Christ as if He were effeminate and weak, remarkable only for passive virtues. But such conceptions are refuted by the indomitable resolution which set its face like a flint, and knew that it would not be ashamed. Note the voluntariness of Christ's surrender. The martyr dies because he cannot help it; Christ dies because He chose. It has been thought that the opened ear refers to something more than the pushing back of the flowing Oriental locks in order to utter the secret of coming sorrow. It is supposed to have some reference to the ancient Jewish custom of boring the ear of the slave to the doorpost of the master's house. Under this metaphor it is held that our Lord chose with keen sympathy the service of the Father, and elected all that it might involve, because He loved Him and would not go out free. The images may be combined. Be it only remembered that He knew and chose all that would come upon Him, and that the fetters which bound Him to the Cross were those of undying love to us and of burning passion for the Father's glory. III. HIS VINDICATION. "He is near that justifieth Me." These are words upon which Jesus may have stayed Himself through those long hours of trial. They said that He was the Friend of publicans and sinners. God has justified Him by showing that if He associates with such, it is to make them martyrs and saints. They said that He was mad. God has justified Him by making His teaching the illumination of the noblest and wisest of the race. They said He had a devil. God has justified Him by giving Him power to cast out the devil and bind him with a mighty chain. They said that He blasphemed when He called Himself the Son of God. God has justified Him by raising Him to the right hand of power, so that He will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. They said that He would destroy the temple and the commonwealth of Israel. God has justified Him in shedding the influence of the Hebrew people through all the nations of the world, and making their literature, their history, their conceptions dominant. IV. HIS APPEAL (ver. 16). To obey the Lord's servant is equivalent to fearing the Lord. He who does the one must do the other. What is this but to proclaim His Deity? (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **A word in season to him that is weary.**—*A word to the weary*:—To speak a word is easy, to speak a word in season is difficult; but to speak a word in season to him that is weary is more difficult still; and yet to be able to accomplish this end wisely and successfully is to be one of the greatest benefactors to our race. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *Weariness*—the word reveals its parentage clearly enough. To be weary is to be worn—or worn out—or worn down. One wears his coat until it is worn out; and so you wear your strength until it is worn out. There is a weariness also which is not the result of excessive toil, but of indolence. For no man sighs so much, complains so much, fears so much, as the man who sets himself the task of passing through life doing nothing. Sometimes weariness is a virtue; sometimes it is a sin. But whether it be virtue or sin, there is no man who does not know well what it is to be weary. (*Ibid.*) *Words to the weary*:—We have many doors in our nature,

and at every one of these weariness may enter. I. There is—to begin at the lowest door of all—the physical one, THE WEARINESS WHICH COMES TO US FROM BODILY TOIL, or from toil which, whether bodily or not, tells upon the body by wasting for the time its energies. So far as such toil is rendered necessary by the very fundamental conditions of our existence, the weariness which ensues upon it is a Divine appointment, and the most benign provision has been made for meeting and banishing it. You need no word in season for such weariness as this. There is something better than a word for you. There is night with its soothing darkness. There is your bed with its repose; and there is sleep, "Nature's soft nurse, that doth knit the ravelled sleeve of care, and steep your senses in forgetfulness." And there is not merely the night, but the Sabbath. But there is also a weariness which has the nature of a chastisement, because it is produced by excessive and needless toil. While labour is a Divine thing in just measure, yet, when it becomes care, worry, vexation, hot and insatiable ambition, greed, it becomes criminal, and draws after it sooner or later grim consequences, the thought of which ought to make men pause. You cannot run both quickly and long. What is the word in season for such cases as these? The word may not be pleasant, for the words in season which God utters to us are often like thunderclaps to startle us, or like a firm grip of the hand which seems to say, "Stop, or you are undone." But surely the word in season to many is: Release your strain, moderate your speed, economize your energies, stop up the leak through which your health is trickling already, and may soon be rushing like a stream; what shall it profit you if you gain the whole world, and lose your life? II. Some men are WEARY WITH PLEASURE. There is no decree of God more stern or more inflexible than that which has determined that misery shall be the constant companion of the man that seeks pleasure. He may be a swift runner, but pleasure runs more swiftly still. Let us accept it as a moral axiom which has no exception, that the fulfilment of duty is the condition of happiness in this world. The word in season, therefore, for those who are weary in pleasure is this: Revise and reverse your whole judgment as to what you are and as to your relation to God, and this world, and the world which is to come. III. Some men are WEARY WITH WELL-DOING WHICH SEEMS TO COME TO SO POOR AN END. This is so common a tendency that we are warned against it, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." "Be ye steadfast, unmovable," etc. Men who are working for God in this world have doubtless a heavy task in hand. The soil is uncongenial. It is beaten hard with sin and evil habit; and the ploughshare enters it with difficulty, and with difficulty makes its way. Take any sphere of benevolence you like, whether the lower one of sympathy with the common sufferings of man, or the higher one of concern for their spiritual necessities and sorrows and dangers, and the labour is no holiday play. Well-doing appears so often like building in a quagmire. We sow good seed, and then the enemy sows tares. We root up one evil, and another springs up in its stead. Well-doing in the shape of teaching would not be so wearying if the children were not so listless, so rude, so dull, so forgetful, so disappointing. Well-doing in the shape of charity would not be so wearying if there were not so much of ingratitude and imposture. What is the word in season to those who are weary in such good work? Such as these: Think, before you withdraw from what appears to be unfruitful labour, that God still holds on His Divine purpose, and is kind to the unthankful and the evil; think that He is good and doeth good continually, and that, were He to grow weary in well-doing, He would plunge the world into desolation in a moment. Think, too, that if you grow weary, all others may grow weary too, and that then the world will be left to itself: ignorance, vice, crime, wretchedness spreading with every hour, until the earth will be little better than a suburb of hell itself. Think, too, that in well-doing you do find some results, though they may not be equal to your hope, and that the results, though unseen, may still be there, and will appear some day, and be reaped by another's hand. And be sure of this, that nothing good is ever lost. IV. There are those who are WEARY OF THE STRIFE WITH SIN. This is emphatically the battle of life and the battle for life. What is the word in season to him who is thus weary? This—that Christ has already vanquished your most powerful foe, and will make you more than conqueror. V. There is one word more in season for those who are WEARY IN SIN, BUT NOT YET WEARY OF IT. Would to God they were weary of it! for to feel it to be a burden and a woe is the first step to deliverance. (*Ibid.*)

Weary souls:—So far as we can tell, all life is joyous, except that of humanity. Even those creatures which are under the care of man have not the joyousness they might have if they were roaming the fields or hills. Look at the horse on the

American prairies; see him in some of the cabs and coal carts at home! Though the life of birds and animals is naturally a happy one, the life of humanity, for the most part, is one of trouble. People who firmly resolve to act rightly and Christianly in this world, shall certainly "have tribulation." In the Bible, we have the record of many people who knew what it is to have a weary soul. Above all weary souls, let us remember the loving Saviour, who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." I. You may be WEARY WITH THE PARTICULAR BURDEN WHICH WEIGHTS YOUR LIFE. Every one of us has a special burden of our own. The Christian philosophy of burden-bearing is to take things as we find them and make the best of them; not like a vicious horse to kick against the "splinter board," or set up our back rebelliously. Directly we submit to the yoke, and say "Thy will be done," our burden becomes lighter. The Divine Word teaches that your life has a Divine purpose. II. Perhaps, your soul is WEARY BECAUSE OF THE UNKINDNESS OF YOUR FRIENDS. Let your only aim be to please God and do your duty; and then, though the action of friends may grieve you, it shall neither hinder your work nor give you a weary soul. III. But another may say that his weary soul is caused by HIS SIN. When you behold Jesus on the Cross you will see what He suffered for sin; and when you behold Him risen from the dead, you will see the power at your hand to enable you to flee from every temptation. IV. Some of you may have weary souls, because YOUR LIFE IS VERY BITTER. But in heaven your sorrow and sighing, like that of the apostle John, shall flee away. (*W. Birch.*)

A word to the weary:—I. Are there any WEARY WORDLINGS here? The soul of man once found its rest in God. Weary, was a word unknown in the language of Eden; for Jehovah was then the spirit's home. Its affections reposed upon the all-sufficient God. He was a Friend of whose company the soul could never tire, and in whose service it never could grow weary. But now that the soul has taken leave of God, it has never found another rest like Him. Till it comes to live on God Himself, the hungry soul of man never will be satisfied. Ye worldlings, who wander joyless through a godless world, with weary feet and withered hearts, seeking rest and finding none, come to Jesus, and He will give you rest. II. Are there any WEARY WITH THE BURDEN OF UNPARDONED GUILT? You remember when Christian had panted up the hill, and came in sight of the Cross, how his burden fell off and rolled away down into the sepulchre; and you remember how he wondered that the sight of a cross should instantly relieve him of his load. Come to Christ upon the Cross, and you will understand the pilgrim's wonder; for your burden will, in like manner, fall off and disappear. III. Are there any WEARIED WITH THE GREATNESS OF THEIR WAY? You have been long seeking salvation. Suppose that one of those winter evenings you went down into the country on a visit to a friend. It is a dark night when the stage coach stops; the conductor steps down, opens the door, and lets you out. He tells you that your friend's house is hard by, and if the night were a little clearer, you would see it just over the way. "'Tis but a step, you cannot miss it." However, you contrive to miss it. Your guide springs up into the box—the long train of lamp light is lost in misty gloom, and the distant rumble of the wheels is drowned in the rush of the tempest. You are left alone. The directions you received were quite correct, and if you followed them implicitly, you could not go wrong. But you have a theory of the matter in your own mind. "What did he mean by saying, that it was just a step? He cannot live so very near the high-way." You pass the gate, and plod away up the hill, till at last you become impatient—for there are no symptoms of a dwelling here. You turn aside into this lane, and you climb over that stile, till weary with splashing through miry stubble fields, and all drenched with driving rain, you find yourself, after many a weary round, precisely where you started. Half dead with fatigue and vexation, you lift the latch of a cottage-door, and ask if they know where such-a-one resides. And a little child undertakes to guide you. He opens a wicket, and points to the long lines of light gleaming through a casement a few paces distant. "Do you see the lights in yon window? Well, that is it; knock, and they'll open the door." In such a homely instance, you all know what it is to be weary in the greatness of your way—to spend your strength in a long circuit, when a single step might have sufficed. But are you sure that it is not in some such way, that you "labour and find no rest," whilst there is but a step betwixt you and Christ? That is the wisest and happiest course which the sinner can take—to go at once to the Saviour. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*)

The weary:—"Weary" denotes a class to which a multitude belong that no man can number, of every nation, kindred, tribe, and people. 1. Physical weariness—of the slave on the march; of the toiler in the sweating den; of the seamstress

working far into the night by the wasting taper; of the mother worn with watching her sick child. 2. Mental weariness—when the fancy can no longer summon at will images of beauty; and the intellect refuses to follow another argument, master another page, or cast up another column. 3. Heart weariness—waiting in vain for the word so long expected but unspoken; for the returning step of the prodigal; for the long-delayed letter. 4. The weariness of the inner conflict of striving day by day against the selfishness and waywardness of the soul on which prolonged resistance makes so slight an impression. 5. The weariness of the Christian worker, worn by the perpetual chafe of human sorrow, sin, and need. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The gift of consolation*:—Nothing so clearly betokens a tongue befitting the disciples of God as the gift of consolation, and such a tongue has He who is the speaker here: "to aid with words him who is exhausted"—through the pain of suffering and mortification of spirit. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) **He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.**—*God's day school*:—"Morning by morning He openeth mine ear to hear as the scholars." If we would rightly understand this Divine application of Isaiah's words, we must first understand the human application of them, looking through the type to the anti-type, and thus beholding the Servant of Jehovah as "blind" and "deaf," yet "well-pleasing" to God as one "magnifying the law and making it honourable," and both shadowing forth and preparing the way for the perfect service of the perfect Servant. Taking first then this human view of the text, observe—I. The closed ears of God's scholars. "He openeth mine ear." In the earlier description of Israel, associated with Isaiah's call to the prophetic office (a passage more frequently quoted in the New Testament than any other words of the Old), the ear is said to be "heavy," and the heart "gross," and the eyes "closed." Alas! this is the sorrowful condition not only of Israel but of humanity. II. The closed ears Divinely opened. "He openeth." The ear is too heavy for the word itself to penetrate till He who breathed it comes. By Him it is opened, at a time of spiritual crisis oftentimes, but even then the scholar of God is too often deaf to his Teacher's voice. His ears need to be often opened anew. "Morning by morning." We must all be day scholars in the school of God. And we learn "as the scholars." The double meaning of this word "scholar" suits the meaning of the passage admirably. A "scholar" is one who is learning his alphabet, and a "scholar" is also one that knows much more than his fellow-men, and can teach them with the "tongue of the scholar." But there must be learning before teaching, and if we are scholars in God's school we shall know "more than the ancients." What then are His lessons? 1. The first lesson God teaches is a lesson of obedience (ver. 5). 2. The second lesson God teaches is a lesson in patience (ver. 6). Morning by morning the Divine voice calls us to suffer as well as to do. 3. The third lesson God teaches is a lesson in boldness (ver. 7). Flint-like are the true scholars of God. Omnipotence is on their side and they know it. 4. The fourth lesson God teaches is a lesson in service (ver. 4). The ear is opened that the tongue may be loosed to speak for Him who opened it. Every scholar must be a teacher. Look at the application of the text to Jesus Christ. Isaiah was His favourite book, and this text doubtless was often in His mind, as it was once upon His lips. (1) Do we learn obedience? He also "learned obedience by the things that He suffered," so that it was "His meat" to do the will of God always, and in Him only was the ideal attitude of obedience realized. "Lo I come: I delight to do Thy will, O My God." (2) Do we painfully learn the lesson of patience? Let us "consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners." (3) Do we gain something of His boldness? It was when the persecutors of the earliest disciples marvelled at the boldness which they showed that "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus," for at His feet they had learned this manly virtue. (4) Do we attempt service? How did God's holy Servant fulfil His consoling mission by speaking words in season to the weary? And the old lesson is also the new, "Have faith in God." The "faith" of the New Testament is the "trust" of the Old. (*H. C. Leonard, M.A.*) *The inspiration of noble ideas*:—Where do great men get their noblest ideas? Michael Angelo produced such exquisite faces that Fiesole declared he must have been in paradise to borrow them. A watchful heart will find God furnishing thoughts for such a generous service. One wonders whether Goethe had not been lately reading that verse (Isa. l. 4) when he said that his best thoughts always came to him unawares, like birds pecking at his windows, and saying, "Here we are!" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *God's voice heard in stillness*:—Said the aged Christian lady to Mark Rutherford, "The voice of God, to me at least, hardly ever comes

in thunder, but I have to listen in perfect stillness to make it out." *Morning communion with God:*—On the 1st of May, in the olden times, many inhabitants of London used to go into the fields to bathe their faces with the early dew upon the grass under the idea that it would render them beautiful. This may have been superstitious, but to bathe one's face every morning in the dew of heaven by prayer and communion, is the sure way to obtain true beauty of life and character. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 6. **I gave My back to the smiters.**—*The shame and spitting:*—I. As THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD. In the person of Christ Jesus, God himself came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. When our Lord came into this world as the representative of God, He came with all His Divine power about Him (ver. 2). He did equal marvels to those which were wrought in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true He did not change water into blood, but He turned water into wine. He did not make their fish to stink, but by His word He caused the net to be filled even to bursting with great fishes. He did the works of His Father, and those works bare witness of Him that He was come in His Father's name. But when God thus came among men He was unacknowledged. What saith the prophet? "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God, discerned Him and rejoiced; but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew Him not. Yet our Lord was admirably adapted to be the representative of God, not only because He was God Himself, but because as man His whole human nature was consecrated to the work, and in Him was neither flaw nor spot. This is especially the sin of those who have heard the Gospel and yet reject the Saviour, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form, and yet they have refused Him. II. I want to set the Lord Jesus before you AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE. III. AS THE SERVANT OF GOD. 1. Christ was personally prepared for service (ver. 4). 2. This service knew no reserve in its consecration. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and lowest of men. 3. There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to express alacrity. It is not said that He reluctantly permitted His enemies to pluck His hair, or smite His back, but "I *gave* My back to the smiter, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." 4. There was no flinching in Him. They spat in His face, but what says He in the seventh verse? "I have set My face like a flint." Oh, the bravery of our Master's silence! Cruelty and shame could not make Him speak. 5. And do you notice all the while the confidence and quiet of His spirit! He almost seems to say, "You may spit upon Me, but you cannot find fault with Me. You may pluck My hair, but you cannot impugn My integrity. You may lash My shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to Me," etc. Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. 6. The last two verses of the chapter read you a noble lesson. "He gave His back to the smiters;" if, then, any of you walk in darkness, this is no new thing for a servant of God. The chief of all servants persevered, though men despised Him. Follow Him, then. Stay yourselves upon God as He did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. IV. AS THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. Our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary, because He Himself is lowly, and meek, and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The comforter must come as a sufferer. Your Master "gave His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair," and therefore He is the Comforter you want. 2. Remark not only His lowliness, but His sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains? Jesus knows all about them, for He "gave His back to the smiters." Do you suffer from what is worse than pain, from scandal and slander? "He hid not His face from shame and spitting." Have you been ridiculed of late? Jesus can sympathize with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of Him. In every pang that rends your heart your Lord has borne His share. Go and tell Him. 3. In addition to His gentle spirit and His power to sympathize, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, His example, for He can argue thus with you, "I gave My back to the smiters. Cannot you do the like? Shall the disciple be above his master?" 4. His example further comforts

us by the fact that He was calm amid it all. 5. Our Saviour's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The back given to the smiters:*—In Ps. cxxix. 3 the same figure is applied to the sufferings of Israel as a nation. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The Roman lash:*—The lash is nothing among us compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen, and that in it were twisted the hucklebones of sheep, with slivers of bone, in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh, which was mangled by its awful strokes. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Plucking off the hair:*—Of the beard (Ezra ix. 3; Neh. xiii. 25); an extreme insult to an Oriental, to whom the beard is the symbol of dignity. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

Vers. 7–9. For the Lord God will help Me.—*Messiah neither ashamed nor put to shame:*—The verse is better rendered thus: "But the Lord Jehovah helps Me, therefore I was not ashamed" (*i. e.* felt no shame); "therefore I made My face like flint" (figure for determination, Ezek. iii. 9), "and knew that I should not be put to shame" (chap. xlii. 4). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Messiah the courageous Champion:*—The Redeemer is as famous for His boldness as for His humility and patience; and, though He yield, yet He is more than a conqueror. Observe—I. THE DEPENDENCE He hath upon God (vers. 7, 9). Whom God employs He will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. Nor will He only assist Him in His work, but accept of Him (ver. 8). By His resurrection Christ was proved to be not the man that He was represented; not a blasphemer, etc. II. THE CONFIDENCE He thereupon hath of success in His undertaking (ver. 7). III. THE DEFIANCE which, in this confidence, He bids to all opposers and opposition. God will help Me, and "therefore have I set My face like a flint." (*M. Henry.*) *Temptation to shame in religion:*—One and the same Divine Person speaks in all this section of the prophet Isaiah. One and the same Being is He, throughout this section, who speaks as "I;" "I came," "I called:" One who asks, "Is My hand shortened that it cannot save?" and then, without break, without transition, speaks of His meritorious obedience, His sufferings, and His shame. Our Lord Himself, when prophesying of Himself the specific humiliations which are here spoken of by the prophet, speaks of them as foretold (Luke xviii. 31, 32). But how then as to the words which follow? Our Lord came into the world to suffer; His human spirit was straitened until those sufferings were accomplished; His daily sufferings in doing the will of His Father were His daily bread. How then to Him belong those words which seem to speak of human struggle, as well as of victory: "I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed"? It is perhaps best explained by that great rule of St. Augustine: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body. For He willed to speak too in us, who vouchsafed to die for us. He made us His members. Sometimes therefore He speaks in the person of His members; sometimes in His own Person, as our Head;" "and the whole He speaketh, as though it were one Person." The words of prophecy seem to be tempered, so as to include us His members, nay rather to speak of our victories in Christ, and of our strength supplied by Him, the Christian's unashamed boldness in the cause of Christ. Those holily unashamed of God now, God will keep from shame; on those ashamed of Him, He will bring the shame they shrink from. It is startling to see how, in the account of the last severing off of those who are cast out for ever from the sight of God, the first place is occupied by cowards (Rev. xxi. 7, 8). There must, then, be something far more malignant, far more offensive to God, and more destructive to salvation, than men think of, in this false shame before men. And yet no one scarcely gives it more than a passing thought; few question earnestly their own consciences about it; few repent of it towards God, or ask His forgiveness of it. It is of moment to know the intensity of the first temptation. First, men cowardly disavow what they know to be right; then they profess what they know to be wrong; then, having disavowed God, they are open to temptation, from whatever quarter of occasion, or surprise, or passion, the impulse may come. They have kindled their fire: they have despised the grace which would quench it: it remains, that it should consume them. And yet, while its influence is so subtle, that it escapes men's observation, unless they are declaring war against it, it is the earliest, the latest, the most infectious, the most universal, the most overspreading, the deadliest disease of the soul. It antedates passion, and it outlives it; it occasions countless sins, but itself is hid under the sins which it occasions; it destroys the goodness of all which seems good, but is unfelt like paralysis; it nips all wakening good, but is unseen like

the frost-wind; it pleads a hatred of hypocrisy and of profession, and is itself the worse hypocrisy of the two, a hypocrisy of evil; to the young, it puts on the appearance of good-nature; to the elder, of courtesy; to the saint, of charity: nothing is too low, nothing too high for its attacks. The senselessness of the sin aggravates its enormity. What is it, of which man is ashamed? It is (and this is a yet deeper aggravation), it is uniformly some gift or grace of Almighty God. In childhood, it was some early habit of piety, which God had vouchsafed to teach, which others had not been taught or had violated. The phases of the sin change with changing years; its essence is unchanged. It is the law of God, or the truth of God, or the friendship of God, and God Himself in all, of whom man stands ashamed before man. And what is this world, before which a man stands ashamed of the Infinite God? Away with such cowardly thoughts of worshipping God, as a sort of Penates, a household god who is to be owned in private and set up within doors, to receive his lip-homage there, and be forgotten or ignored in the face of men. Accustom thyself to the thought of the ever-present Presence of thy God; look to that Eye which recalled Peter to Himself, and which rests on thee; be ashamed to be ungrateful to thy Redeemer, a recreant to thy God; and another fear will displace human fear, another shame will dispel human shame, a shame which maketh not ashamed, a shame which is the earnest of everlasting glory, the shame to be ashamed of thy God. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) **Therefore have I set My face like a flint.**—*I set My face like a flint:* —"the holy hardness of perseverance" (*Stier*);—words, too, which doubtless have a special reference to the historic fulfilment. "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face (as a flint) to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 51). (*Michaelis.*) *The strong will:*—The happiest of gifts for a man to be born with is strength of will; not that a man can by it avoid suffering and sin; but for this—that suffering especially raises and heightens the strong will; that when it forsakes sin it forsakes it without a sigh. Happiness within, attractiveness towards others, ease of repentance and amendment, firmness against opposition, are the splendid dower which the strong will brings to the soul. It is our wisdom then to ask, How shall we keep or make our wills strong? 1. We cannot do this merely by persisting in having our own way, as we call it. Our own way may be wrong; and no one ever uses the word strength in connection with crime or fault—never calls a sinful, a wilful, a violent man a strong man. The reason is evident, namely, that wilful sinning is only using a will in the direction in which it is easiest to use it. And this cannot make the will stronger, any more than a mind would grow strong, which employed itself only on intellectual work which presented no difficulty to it. The will must make progress by avoiding things to which it is prone, and by aiming at things which it simply knows in any way to be good, although for the time being it may be that they are not fully desired. 2. There are times when there rises before us a noble ideal of what we ought to be, and we feel an impulse to believe we might be. What is that ideal? It is the "will of God concerning us." It is what we may each become by the power of the Spirit of God. Into this ideal we cannot at once pass. But we can be ever approaching it. It is not in human nature to make that sudden change, but it is perfectly possible to make a beginning. And for this purpose we must call in the aid of that very will itself to act upon our will; for there is no power in us higher, more primary, than the will. If the will is to be affected, the will itself must do the work. Suppose one resolve be made; then here at once our will begins to be of constant use to us, and to grow stronger in itself. Our will is not really acting at all when it is working out, however strongly, a natural inclination. The will is only strengthened when it is set to active work, something which we have clearly seen to be our duty, although when we come to do it we find the pursuit of it tax our strength exceedingly. (*Archbishop Benson, D.D.*) *The Redeemer's face set like a flint:*—I. HOW HIS STERN RESOLVE WAS TESTED. 1. By the offers of the world. The populace wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. 2. By the persuasions of His friends. Christ's kinsmen said that He was beside Himself, and they would have laid hold of Him, and confined Him if they could. They thought His zeal had carried Him beyond the bounds of reason; and when He told His disciples about His approaching death upon the cross, "Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee;" and all the disciples would fain have persuaded Him to choose an easier path than that which led to Calvary, and the grave. 3. By the unworthiness of His clients. "He came unto His own," etc. 4. By the bitterness which He tasted at His entrance upon His great work as our substitutionary sacrifice. The first drops of that awful tempest which fell upon Him in Gethsemane were hot and terrible. 5.

By the ease with which He could have relinquished the enterprise if He had wished to do so. 6. By the taunts of those who scoffed at Him. 7. By the full stress of the death-agony. II. How His STEADFAST RESOLVE WAS SUSTAINED. According to our text and its connection—1. Our Lord's steadfastness resulted from His Divine schooling (ver. 4). 2. It was sustained by His conscious innocence (ver. 8). 3. It was maintained by His unshaken confidence in the help of God (ver. 7). 4. It was sustained by the joy that was set before Him (Heb. xii. 2). III. CHRIST'S STEADFAST RESOLVE IMITATED. 1. If there is anything right in this world, be on the side of it. 2. If you have a right purpose that glorifies God, carry it out. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Courage in danger:*—Leonidas being told that the Persian archers with whom he had to fight were so numerous that their arrows would darken the sun, said, "So much the better; we shall then fight in the shade." (*R. Macculloch.*) *Fixed determination: Joan of Arc:*—It was in vain that her father, when he heard her purpose, swore to drown her ere she should go to the field with men-at-arms: it was in vain that the priest, the wise people of the village, the captain of Vancoulers doubted and refused to aid her. "I must go to the king," persisted the peasant girl, "even if I wear my limbs to the very knees. I had far rather rest and spin by my mother's side," she pleaded, with a touching pathos, "for this is no work of my choosing; but I must go and do it, for my Lord wills it." "And who," they asked, "is your Lord?" "He is God." Words such as these touched the rough captain at last; he took Jeanne by the hand, and swore to lead her to the king. (*J. R. Green.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **He is near that justifieth Me.**—*Jehovah the justifier:*—The consciousness of innocence is expressed (as often in the Book of Job) under the conception of a legal process. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *To "justify"* is to show to be in the right, by giving Him victory in His cause. The time-long conflict of Israel and her religion with the nations and their idolatries is represented under the figure of a process or plea before God's tribunal. The triumph of the religion of Jehovah is Israel's "justification," or success in her plea. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Messiah's justification:*—By His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the right hand of God, with their joyful consequences, He was declared to be the true Messiah, and the Son of God with power (Acts ii. 36). (*R. Macculloch.*) *The enemies of Christ as a moth-eaten garment:*—They fall into decay like a worn-out garment, and become the food of the moth, which they already carry within them—a figure of destroying power which works imperceptibly and slowly, yet all the more surely (chap. li. 8; Job xiii. 28; Hos. v. 12). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Who is among you that feareth the Lord?**—*The fear of the Lord* blends its operations with the exercise of every other grace. It intermixes with faith, and renders it fruitful; it co-operates with love, and prevents it from becoming secure; it unites with hope, and keeps it from swelling into presumption; it mingles with joy, and so moderates it that we rejoice with trembling. It extends its benign influence through every department of Divine worship, and so occupies the mind with awful respect for God as excites to caution and circumspection in every situation and service, whilst it cherishes amiable humility in the Divine presence. (*R. Macculloch.*) *"Light" and "darkness":*—There is no more intelligible image—none more interwoven into the texture of popular thought and popular phraseology—than that by which light is made to express joy and felicity, while darkness, and other kindred terms, are employed to denote misery and discomfort. So commonly are such words applied in a metaphysical sense, that, in the case of some of them (the word gloom, for example) it is hardly possible to say which of the two they are oftenest used to indicate—a certain state of mind, or a certain state of outward nature. (*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.*) *The child of light walking in darkness:*—(1) See how the Lord inquires for His people. In every congregation He asks this question: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord?" These are the wheat upon the threshing-floor. (2) Observe, how clearly the Lord describes His own people. The description is brief, but remarkably full. Holy reverence within the heart, and careful obedience manifested in the life, these are the two infallible marks of the true man of God. (3) The Lord not only makes an inquiry for these people, but takes note of their condition. I. WHAT IS THIS CONDITION INTO WHICH A CHILD OF GOD MAY COME? The person described is one that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of His servant, yet "walketh in darkness, and hath no light." 1. **To many who know nothing** of Christian

experience this condition might seem to be a surprising one. 2. This condition is a severe test of grace. 3. It is also very sorrowful. 4. Perhaps the worst feature of this darkness is, that it is so bewildering. You have to walk, and yet your way is hidden from your eyes. 5. Yet this does not absolve us from daily duty. The walk has to be continued, though the light has departed. When it is quite dark, it is safe to sit down till the day dawns. If I cannot sleep, at any rate I can quietly rest, till the sun is up. He that believeth shall not make haste. But what if you cannot stand still? What if you may not remain where you are? Something has to be done, and done at once; and thus you are compelled to walk on, though you cannot see an inch before you. What but a Divine faith can do this? WHAT IS THERE TO TRUST TO WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A CONDITION AS THAT? 1. What is there to trust in the name of Jehovah? It is "I Am," and signifies His self-existence. This is a fine foundation for trust. 2. But we understand by "the name" the revealed character of God. When thou canst not see thy way, then open this Book and try to find out what sort of God it is in whom thou dost trust. 3. By "the name of the Lord" is also meant His dear Son, for it is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah has proclaimed His name. 4. It is also good when you are thinking of the name of the Lord, to remember that to you it signifies what you have seen of God in your own experience. This is His memorial or name to you. 5. But, furthermore, the text says, "Let him stay upon his God." Let him lean upon his God; make God his stay, his prop, his rest. This is a variation from the former sentence. He was to trust in the name of Jehovah, but now he is to lean upon "his God." You have taken God to be your God, have you not? If so, He has also taken you to be His own. There is a covenant between you: lean on that covenant. Treat it as a valid covenant in full force. III. WHY SHOULD WE TRUST GOD AT SUCH TIMES? 1. If you do not trust Him now, you will have cause to suspect whether you ever did trust Him at all. 2. Because His promises were made for dark hours. 3. Here a permit is especially issued for you, to allow you to trust in God in darkness. Thus saith the Lord, "Let him trust." 4. More than this, I understand this verse to be a command to trust in the name of the Lord. It is an order to trust in our God up to the hilt, for it bids us "stay" ourselves upon our God. We are not fitfully to trust, and then to fear; but to come to a stay in God, even as ships enter a haven, cast their anchors, and then stay there till the tempest is over-past. 5. If you do not stay upon God in the dark, it would seem as if, after all, you did not trust God, but were trusting to the light, or were relying on your own eyesight. 6. Remember one thing more, our blessed Lord and Master was not spared the blackest midnight that ever fell on human mind. IV. WHAT WILL COME OF IT IF WE DO TRUST IN GOD IN THE DARK. 1. Such a faith will glorify God. It does not glorify God to trust Him when you have a thousand other props and assistances. 2. It is very likely that through this darkness you will be humbled. 3. If thou wilt trust God in thy trial, thou wilt prove and enjoy the power of prayer. 4. If in your darkness you go to God and trust Him, you will become an established Christian. 5. By and by we shall come out into greater light than we have as yet hoped for. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Light in darkness:*—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCE expressed by the words "walking in darkness, and having no light." This description is properly applicable only to circumstances of the deepest distress. In our darkest hours there are generally some rays of light left. If some enjoyments are withdrawn, others remain. If we suffer in one way, we receive pleasure in another. Seldom does it happen that our condition is so deplorable as to be entirely gloomy and wretched. In such circumstances we are necessarily led to look out for comfort. II. OUR BEST RELIEF IS TRUSTING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD and staying ourselves upon God. Let us turn our thoughts to the Deity, and reflect on His perfect government. 1. In such circumstances we should consider that the Deity is always intimately present with us, and sees all that passes in the world. 2. We should further consider that this Being stands in the nearest relation to us. He is our parent, we are His offspring 3. To these reflections, let us add that this Being is almighty, all-wise, and all-benevolent. III. THE RELIEF DERIVED FROM HENCE CAN BE ENJOYED ONLY BY THOSE THAT FEAR THE LORD. It is in well-doing that we are commanded to commit our souls to God. (*R. Price, D.D.*) *The believer in darkness:*—I. THE CHARACTER MENTIONED. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES STATED. He walks in darkness, etc. No spiritual light? No; he who has Jesus Christ in his heart cannot be ignorant. Nor is he miserable. Nor does he walk in the darkness of sin. The text refers to providential darkness. III. THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN. Trust in the name of the Lord—in His power, benevolence, fidelity. (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*) *A*

day-star for dark hearts:—1. If this were the only word Isaiah had ever written, it would be cherished as a marvel of sweetest wisdom; just as, were there only one star, it would be admired with surpassing interest and wonder. But, one amongst many, the brightest star and the richest text ceases to enkindle the enthusiasm or attract the gaze of men. 2. There are many things about this word strikingly suggestive—(1) The Old Testament designation of a saint—"One that feareth the Lord." (2) By linking this verse (ver. 10) to the one that follows, and studying the two as a pair, what lessons do they give—on the superiority of Divine darkness to human light; on the blessedness of rather being under the cloud, patiently waiting God's appearing, than striking sparks of our own light to lead us in the ways of common life. Heaven-sent darkness—say care or affliction, is better than sparks of one's own kindling—say gaiety, mirth, delusive theories of life. 3. The text assumes that, although joy in the Holy Ghost ought to mark every saint of God, yet, as a matter of fact, the truest saints have to endure darkness, gloom, and trial. And it requires that all such should not be dispirited by the clouds which cross their sky, but that even when long patience and earnest gazing fail to perceive the presence of God they should still rely on Him. Many would say: If any among you fears the Lord and walks in darkness, let him suspect there is something wrong; be careful to examine himself whether he is in the faith, etc. But where we would say "Examine," the prophet says "Trust." (*R. Glover, D.D.*) *Encouragement:*—The prophet's word—I. BIDS THE PENITENT HOPE. II. BRINGS COMFORT TO THOSE EMBARRASSED BY HONEST INQUIRY. III. BRINGS COMFORT TO ALL "THE TROUBLED." There are a multitude whose outward or inward troubles produce darkness whatever their character may be. Some, for instance, are troubled by their state of health; it is such as produces a peculiar tendency to gloom. There are others who are troubled with the course of Providence. Others are troubled in soul. Such temptations beset them! Resisted, these renew their attack. Overcome, they rise up afresh to distress them. (*Ibid.*) *Depression:*—I suppose that there are very few, if any, who reach old age or even middle life without the painful experience of times of depression of spirits. There come, perhaps, days in the life of every one when all things seem against him. Such times are not foreign to the experience of God's greatest saints, and Isaiah appears to contemplate them as times to be expected by the servant of God. 1. Isaiah is not alone in this. There are numberless instances in Holy Scripture which show how true it is. 2. But whatever the cause, if the conscience is clear from wilful sin, what is our duty under such a state of depression? The text sets before us two things as needful—(1) Obedience. The prophet assumes that those to whom he is speaking will, in spite of their perplexity, obey. He would have them acquiesce in the God-permitted darkness, however trying and painful it may be. Better darkness than a light which is not kindled from above. And yet not seldom it is such a time of depression which drives a man to despair, and leads him in the end to give up his faith altogether. In hours of darkness great is the temptation to have recourse to fires of our own kindling—to seek for light elsewhere than from the "Father of Lights;" and so in the verse following that taken as the text, Isaiah turns to those who are yielding to the temptation, and warns them in tones of scornful irony against false lights of their own kindling. (2) Faith. 3. This week we are watching our Lord in His path through the dark vale of suffering and along the way of sorrows. Our eyes are fixed on but one figure. To-day we contemplate those two points which the Epistle especially brings out—His perfect obedience, and His perfect trust. Let us learn a much-needed lesson—"It is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his Master." (*E. C. S. Gibson, M.A.*) *Trust in God:*—I. THE CHARACTER AND STATE OF THOSE WHO ARE EXHORTED TO TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. 1. They that fear God may signify—(1) Those who have a sincere regard to the commandments of God, and have chosen Him as their portion and hope. Those who desire and deserve to be distinguished from the profane despiser, the secure formalist, or the disguised hypocrite. Those, in a word, who are, and who desire to appear upon the Lord's side in every struggle, and who resolve with Joshua, that whatever others do, they will serve the Lord. (2) But we may explain the words in a stricter sense, and suppose, that by fearing the Lord is to be understood a due reverence for His infinite majesty, a humble veneration for His sacred authority. 2. The next part of the character is, "and obeyeth the voice of His servant;" that is to say is willing to hearken to the message of God by the mouth of His servants. 3. "That walketh in darkness, and hath no light." (1) Sometimes light signifies knowledge, and darkness signifies ignorance (Eph. v. 8; Acts xxvi. 18; Job xxxvii. 19).

(2) Sometimes darkness signifies distress or trouble, and the correspondent signification of light is deliverance and joy (2 Sam. xxii. 28, 29 ; Job xix. 8 ; Ps. xcvii. 11 ; Esther viii. 16). None of these senses is to be excluded in the passage before us. Believers may walk in darkness, when ignorant or uncertain as to what nearly concerns them, as well as under distress and trouble. They have also a mutual influence upon, produce, and are produced by one another. A good man may walk in darkness—When he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his interest in the Divine favour. When he is under the pressure of outward calamity. When the state of the Church is such, that he cannot understand or explain, in a satisfying manner, the course of Divine providence. II. THE DUTY OF TRUST IN GOD AND THE FOUNDATION OF IT. Trust is a reliance or confidence in God, that, however discouraging appearances may be for the present time, yet, by His power and wisdom, our desires and expectation shall take place, whether as to deliverance from trouble, or the obtaining of future blessings. Trust rests ultimately on the promise. It is of the greatest moment to understand the nature and tenor of the promises. For this end, it may be proper to distinguish the promises of God, as to futurity, into two heads, absolute and conditional. By absolute promises I understand only those that are so in the most unlimited sense, that is to say, revealed as a part of the fixed plan of Providence, suspended on no terms but what all, of every character, may expect will certainly come to pass. Conditional promises divide into three different heads.—(1) Promises made to persons of such or such a character, or in such or such a state. (2) Promises, the performance of which is suspended on our compliance with something previously required, as the condition of obtaining them. (3) Promises, not only suspended on both the preceding terms, but upon the supposition of some circumstances in themselves uncertain, or to us unknown. III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION. 1. See what judgment you ought to form of inward suggestions, and strong or particular impressions upon your minds. The suggestion of a passage of Scripture of itself gives no title to the immediate application of it, because the great deceiver may undoubtedly suggest Scripture, as we find he could reason from it in our Saviour's temptation. We are, in every such case, to consider the tenor of it, if it be a promise or encouragement, that is, how and in what manner it may be safely applied. If any thing happens to be suggested that expressly suits our present condition, either by setting home the obligation of duty, with particular evidence upon the conscience, or pointing out the grounds of comfort, it ought to be thankfully acknowledged as from the Spirit of God. 2. See what it is that we ought to seek for with the greatest earnestness, and may hope to obtain with the greatest confidence. 3. Adore the wisdom, justice and mercy of God, in the order He hath established, according to the different nature of the promises. That which is of unspeakable value, and radically contains all the rest, is placed first in order, and offered in the most free and gracious manner, without money and without price. Salvation is preached to the chief of sinners, and a Saviour held forth as able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. 4. Learn what is the plainest, the shortest, and indeed, the only sure way to deliverance from distress or calamity of whatever kind. It is to fly to the mercy of God through the blood of Christ, to renew the exercises of faith in Him, and you will perceive every other covenant-blessing flow clear and unmixed from this inexhaustible source. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The want of assurance:*—I. THE CHARACTER ADDRESSED is distinctly drawn. It is "a child of light walking in darkness." Poverty, disease, litigation, oppression, perplexity, the loss of intimate friends and relations, doubts, disappointments, errors in religion, actual transgressions, and the temptations of the adversary, working with the corruptions of the human heart, are permitted in the providence of God, to affect Christians in various degrees of perturbation and sorrow, until they "walk in darkness and have no light." II. THE DUTY RECOMMENDED. "Let him trust," etc. (*A. McLeod, D.D.*) *The duty of those who have not assurance:*—I. DISTINGUISH DOUBTS OF YOUR OWN PIETY, FROM THE SIN OF UNBELIEF. 1. Doubting respects ourselves ; and calls in question our having already become subjects of Divine grace : but unbelief respects the Lord, and calls in question, either the reality of Divine things, or Christ's willingness and power to save them that believe. 2. Doubting of our safety does no more than reject the evidence which is furnished by our own minds ; an evidence which is often very imperfectly delivered and received : but unbelief always rejects the testimony which God has given us of His own Son, and so, by contradicting God, makes him a liar, so far as the sinner has it in his power. 3. Doubting of one's piety may be at times both reasonable and profitable ; for

when a man has but a small measure of grace, it may lead him to seek for more: but unbelief, always against the Word and attributes of the God of our salvation, is unreasonable, unprofitable, and impious. 4. Doubting of one's personal piety often includes, not only anxiety to be saved by Divine grace, but also a sincere desire to attain to an assured interest in the everlasting covenant: but unbelief excludes the idea of love to the true God, rejects the covenant of grace, and distinctly relinquishes the mercy which is offered in the Lord Jesus Christ. 5. Doubts are consistent, not only with sincere piety, but also with progress in sanctification: but unbelief is the exercise of an unregenerate heart. 6. Doubting of one's holiness humbles under a sense of sin, and produces penitence and sorrow: but unbelief hardens the heart into negligence or despair; or exasperates the sinner more and more against Divine things. II. ASCERTAIN, WITH ALL DILIGENCE, THE CAUSE OF YOUR OWN DOUBTS AND UNEASINESS: for it is by understanding your disease, you will be qualified to apply the remedy provided in the Gospel of God. 1. Error causes darkness and doubt. Clear views of Divine truth is the preventive and the cure. 2. Indolence, and consequent inattention to the due improvement of our talents, often occasion spiritual decline and despondence. The remedy is found in vigilance and Christian activity. 3. The passions, through the remaining corruptions of the heart, often cause transgressions, and consequent doubts and despondence. 4. Satan is the principal cause of those doubts and fears; and resistance to his exertions is the means of assurance. 5. In pointing out the duty of Christians, who have not the assurance of salvation, I must not omit, Steadfast continuance in practical obedience to all the commandments. (*Ibid.*) *God's message to the desponding*:—When such an experience comes upon the saint, it will not be always safe to say that it is the shadow of some special sin. The security of the saint is rooted in the fact that God has a hold of him, and not at all in his consciousness that he has a hold of God. His comfort may be affected by the latter, but his safety is due entirely to the former. Hence, they who roundly affirm that if a man be walking in darkness and finding no light he cannot be a Christian, are making salvation depend, not on God's work for a man and in him, but simply and entirely on his own emotions. Moreover, they are strangely oblivious of some of the best-known passages in the history even of the most eminent saints. But despondency is not a state of mind in which any one desires to remain. And he should be encouraged to get out of it as quickly as possible. For it puts everything about him into shadow. It sets all his songs to a minor key. It gives to all his prayers a wailing pathos. It takes away much of his buoyancy and elasticity for work. I. THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DESPONDENCY. 1. It may spring from natural temperament. Each of us is born with a certain predisposition to joy or sadness, to irascibility or patience, to quickness of action or deliberateness of conduct, which we call temperament. While conversion may Christianize that temperament, it does not change it. 2. Spiritual despondency may be caused by disease. That which we call lowness of spirits is very often the result of some imprudence in diet, or some local disturbance. See the relief which this affords. It removes from religion the responsibility for the depression of such a man as Cowper, and traces his spiritual gloom to disease of the brain. 3. Spiritual despondency is often the result of trial. Think of Peter's words: "Ye are in heaviness through manifold trials." One affliction will not usually becloud our horizon. But when a whole series of distresses comes on us in succession, the effect is terrible. First, it may be, comes sickness, and we are getting round from that when business difficulties overwhelm us. These are scarcely arranged before bereavement comes; and while we are still in the valley, we are set upon by Apollyon in the shape of some scandalous accuser who seeks to rob us of our good name. 4. Spiritual despondency may be caused by mental perplexity. The old beliefs are once more on their trial, and when a youth reaches the age when he must exchange a traditional piety for a personal conviction, he is plunged for the time into the greatest misery. It seems to him almost as if everything were giving way beneath him. II. THE COUNSELS TO THE DESPONDING which are given or suggested by this text. 1. The oppressed spirit must keep on fearing the Lord and obeying the voice of His servant. 2. To the desponding believer the second thing to be said is, keep on trusting God. 3. Then, let us not fail to note the deep meaning of that word "stay." It encourages you to lean your whole weight upon God, and to do that continuously. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Desertion*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF HIM TO WHOM THIS COUNSEL IS ADDRESSED. II. THE STATE IN WHICH SUCH AN ONE IS SOMETIMES FOUND. 1. He may want the light of direction. 2. He may want the light of knowledge. 3. He may want the light of comfort. III. WHAT SHALL HE DO IN THIS TRYING HOUR? (*H.*

Verschoyle.) *Willing and unwilling unbelief:*—For practical purposes we may make one broad distinction—that between willing and unwilling unbelievers. I turn to the consideration of that class of unbelievers who would believe if they could; who are neither rebels against moral restraint, nor consumed by a morbid pride: who love good deeds and good men and desire only to know and believe what is true. It is strange that some of them should accuse themselves of unbelief, seeing that the very wish to believe is a sign that they do believe already—a proof of loyalty to their Father in heaven rooted deep down in their inmost souls. Their faith is genuine though not strong enough to bear the fruits of love to God or of hope and consolation. There are those to whom the difficulty of believing in God is all but insuperable owing to the constitution of their minds. To such, every conception, to be a conception at all, must be accurate and sharply defined. Reason stands like a sentinel before the door of the imagination and feelings and will let nothing pass that does not carry the passport of clear and absolute definition. They are, therefore, for the time incapable of realizing any of the joys of belief and can no more be blamed for their unbelief than for not being able to fly. I do not think religion is attainable by the mere exercise of the reason. Another source of difficulty is also constitutional. When people are of a desponding and melancholy temperament, they naturally dwell on the darker side of things; and as this is the exact opposite of faith in God, no wonder it should be so much more difficult for them to believe. It is true, and there are numberless instances to prove it, that many a naturally depressed mind has found its only relief from apprehension and despondency in the sense of God's abiding friendliness. It has been said to me more than once:—The next best thing to believing for one's self is to see others believe. So it behoves all who live in the celestial sunshine of faith and hope to reflect by their cheerful and pure lives as much as possible the light that shines on their own souls upon the hearts of others less happy than themselves. (*C. Voysey, M.A.*) *Spiritual darkness* (with Micah vii. 8):—Isaiah describes the experience. Micah besides that describes himself as being, or having been, in the heart of the experience. The Bible is a many-sided book. I. DARKNESS AS A FACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, AND THE CHRISTIAN'S PROPER EXERCISE UNDER IT. In the natural world it is not always light, at least with our planet. The sun goes down and darkness spreads. So in the higher life. The spiritual heavens are not always bright. Some sun or other that had been shedding its light on the soul goes down, and the man sits in darkness. 1. It may be the light of faith that is darkened. Spiritual realities are withdrawn into shadow. 2. It may be the light of God's face that is felt to be withdrawn. 3. Darkness may come in the form of the fading away of some Christian hope—personal hopes or hopes for the kingdom of God. This dark experience gives a striking demonstration that God only is man's Comforter. II. DARKNESS AS A MEANS OF SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY. Perhaps the best explanation of this darkness, and it is a vindication too, is found in the results which it works. In nature the darkness of night lets us see what we cannot see when the sun is shining. It is the same with spiritual night, or may be. The man of God may then get great enlargement of spiritual information and understanding. There need be no mystery why all this is so. The man that sits in darkness is by the pressure of his position made a more diligent searcher into Divine things. III. DARKNESS AS A DISCIPLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. It may secure for it some of its best graces—the mildest, the most mellowed, the most hallowed. There are plants that grow best in a dim light. Amongst those Christian graces that take deeper root in the dark are: 1. Humility. 2. Trustfulness. 3. Self-surrender. Conclusion—1. The painfulness of this discipline must not be forgotten. They only know the horrors of Divine desertion who have relished the joys of Divine communion. If these things are done in the green tree what shall be done in the dry? If God takes such means to improve grace, what means will He take to punish sin? 2. Sympathize with the deserted child of God. God is not angry with him. "Behind a frowning providence," etc. God does earnestly remember him still (Jer. xxxi. 20). 3. Ye who sit in darkness beware of two things—impatience and sullen indifference. (*J. Wardrop, D.D.*) *Spiritual darkness:*—I. This DARKNESS may arise possibly—1. From over-occupation in the affairs of life. The questionable has been acted upon as the admissible. 2. From a disordered state of the body. The brain has not been kept clear by rational living. Late hours, undue excitement have brought on spiritual dyspepsia; or excesses of youth are now demanding their penalty, or an inheritance of evils has caused it. 3. From a non-apprehension of the fulness of the atonement of Christ. We may believe in God's ability to pardon, but do not realize how He leads us into holiness; or

whether we have come to Christ in the right way, or about the uncertainty as to the time of our conversion, or fear lest the past neglect to make progress in the Divine life should cut us off from all hope; or the gloom comes from neglecting the Bible and prayer for something less profitable, or from over-religious excitement that has given us a distaste for obscurer and quieter work, or disappointment in hopes respecting the coming of Christ's kingdom, or from seeing much of mystery and pain around, or from trouble how to save the masses, or from the spread of materialistic ideas, and so on. II. How are Christians to be delivered from it? "Trust in the name of the Lord." We know how a name can cheer men. The mention of the name of Cæsar and of Wellington had a wonderful effect upon their men. Trust in Him for pardon and sanctification. You are His friend, and are longing for Him. He will work in you. Trust absolutely in Christ; "stay" upon Him. A sufferer of fourteen years said, "I can bear anything, for Christ is with me." (*F. Hastings.*)

A child of light walking in darkness:—I. One who truly fears God, and is obedient to Him, may be in a condition of darkness, and have no light; and may walk many days and years in that condition. 1. Walking in darkness is taken (1 John i. 6) for living in sin and ungodliness. But so it is not to be taken here; for Christ would not have encouraged such to trust in God, who is light, and there can be no fellowship between Him and such darkness, as the apostle tells us. Nay, the Holy Ghost reproves such as do "lean on the Lord" and yet transgress (Mic. iii. 11). And besides, the text speaks of such who for their present condition fear God and are obedient to Him, which if they thus walked in darkness they could not be said to do. 2. Neither is it to be meant of walking in ignorance, as in John xii. 35. For one that hath no light, in that sense, can never truly fear God nor obey Him. 3. He means it of discomfiture and sorrow, as often we find in Scripture darkness to be taken (Eccles. v. 17); as, on the contrary, light, because it is so "pleasant a thing to behold," is put for comfort (Eccles. xi. 7). And that so it is taken here is evident by that which is opposed in the next verse, "Walk ye in your light, yet ye shall lie down in sorrow." But—4. Of what kind of sorrow and for what? (1) It is not to be restrained to outward afflictions only, which are called man's infirmities, as being common to man; which arise from things of this world, or from the men of the world; though to walk in darkness is so taken (Isa. lix. 9). For, in them also, a man's best support is to trust in God. But yet that cannot be the only or principal meaning of it. He adds, "and hath no light," that is, no comfort. Now, as philosophers say, there is no pure darkness without some mixture of light, so we may say, there is not mere or utter darkness caused by outward afflictions: no outward affliction can so universally environ the mind, as to shut up all the crannies of it, so that a man should have no light. Besides, God's people, when they walk in the greatest outward darkness, may have most light in their spirits. But here is such an estate spoken of, such a darkness as hath no light in it. Therefore—(2) It is principally to be understood of the want of inward comfort in their spirits, from something that is between God and them. Because the remedy here provided is faith. In the foregoing verses he had spoken of justification. But because there might be some poor souls who, though truly fearing God, yet might want this assurance, and upon the hearing of this might be the more troubled, because not able to express that confidence which he did, he adds, "Who is among you," etc. These words have a relation also to the 4th verse, where he says that God had given him the "tongue of the learned, to minister a word of comfort in season to him that is weary and heavy laden;" and thereupon, in this verse, he shows the blessed condition of such persons as are most weary through long walking in darkness; and withal he discovereth to them the way of getting out of this darkness, and recovering comfort again. II. What is the condition of such a one who is thus in darkness, and hath no light? 1. He is said to have no light. "Light," saith the apostle (Eph. v. 13), "is that whereby things are made manifest," *i. e.* to the sense of sight, and as light and faith are here severed, so sight also is (2 Cor. v. 7) distinguished from faith, which is the evidence of things absent and not seen (Heb. xi. 1). When, therefore, here he saith he hath no light, the meaning is, he wants all present sensible testimonies of God's favour to him. To understand this, we must know that God, to help our faith, vouchsafeth a threefold light to His people, to add assurance and joy to their faith; which is to faith as a back of steel to a bow. (1) The immediate light of His countenance. (2) The sight and comfort of their own graces, unto which so many promises belong. So that often when the sun is set, yet starlight appears. (3) Though he want the present light of God's countenance, and the sight

of present grace, yet he may have a comfortable remembrance of what once before he had still left. 2. He walks in darkness. (1) To walk in darkness implies to be in doubt whither to go. (2) Those in darkness are apt to stumble at everything. (3) Darkness is exceedingly terrible and full of horror. (*T. Goodwin.*) *The child of God in darkness*:—I. THE EFFICIENT CAUSES OF THIS WOEFUL, DESPERATE, DARK CONDITION OF GOD'S CHILD. 1. God's Spirit. The Spirit is not the direct efficient or positive cause of them. The Spirit of God may concur in this darkness that befalls His child. (1) Privatively. He may suspend His testimony, and the execution of his office of witnessing adoption. (2) Positively. He may further proceed to reveal and represent God as angry with His child for such and such sins formerly committed, and make him sensible thereof; not barely by concealing His love, but by making impressions of His wrath upon his conscience immediately, and not by outward crosses only. 2. A man's own guilty and fearful heart. 3. Satan. He works upon (1) carnal reason, (2) guilt of conscience, (3) jealousies and fears. II. THE CASES WHEREIN GOD LEAVES HIS CHILDREN UNTO THIS DARKNESS. 1. Extraordinary; as—(1) Out of His prerogative. (2) In case He means to make a man eminently wise, and able to comfort others. (3) In case of extraordinary comforts and revelations. 2. Ordinary. (1) In case of carnal confidence. (2) For neglecting such special opportunities of comforts and refreshings as God hath vouchsafed; as for the neglect of holy duties, wherein God did offer to draw nigh to us. (3) In case of not exercising the graces which a man hath; when Christians are, as it were, between sleeping and waking. (4) In case of some gross sin committed against light, unhumbled for, or proving scandalous, or of old sins long forgotten. (5) In case of a stubborn spirit under outward afflictions. (6) In case of deserting His truth, and not professing it and appearing for it when He calls us to do it. (7) In case of unthankfulness, and too common an esteem had of assurance, and of freedom from those terrors and doubtings which others are in. III. THE ENDS FOR WHICH GOD LEAVETH HIS CHILDREN UNTO THIS DARKNESS. 1. To show His power and faithfulness, in upholding, raising up, and healing such a spirit again as hath been long and deadly wounded with inward terrors. 2. As to know the power of Christ's resurrection, so the "fellowship of His sufferings;" that thereby the soul may be made more "conformable to Him." 3. To put the greater difference between the estate of God's children here, and that hereafter in heaven. 4. To let us see whence spiritual comforts and refreshings come: that God alone keeps the keys of that cupboard, and alone dispenseth them how and when He pleaseth. 5. Other ends God hath, to make trial of our graces and a discovery of them. The same end that God had in leading His people through "the great wilderness, where no water was," where "scorpions stung them," which was to prove them, etc.; the same ends hath God in suffering His people to go through this desert, barrenness, and darkness, where no light is, and where terrors of the law do sting them—for His dealings then were types of God's dealings with His people now—to prove them, and to make trial of their hearts. (1) There is no grace God tries more than the grace of faith. (2) Of all temptations none try it more than desertion of God's countenance. (3) In these conflicts of faith with desertions consisteth the height of our Christian warfare. 6. As it makes for the trial and discovery of graces, so it is a means sanctified to increase them, and to eat out corruptions. (1) It is a means to destroy the flesh. (2) To humble. (3) To bring in more assurance and establishment. (4) It trains you to fear God more, and to obey Him. (5) To set believers' hearts a-work to pray more and more earnestly. (6) It causeth them to prize the light of God's countenance the more when they again obtain it, and so set a higher price upon it, and to endeavour by close walking with God, as children of light, to keep it. (*Ibid.*) *Counsel to those who walk in darkness*:—1. Take heed of rash, desperate, impatient and unbelieving speeches and wishes. 2. Let the troubled soul make diligent search. 3. Keep and lend one ear, as well to hear and consider what makes for their comfort, as unto what may make against them. 4. Make diligent search into, and call to remembrance what formerly hath been between God and you. The remembrance of former things doth often uphold, when present sense fails. 5. But now if former signs remembered bring thee no comfort in, but the waves that come over thy soul prove so deep that thou canst find no bottom to cast anchor on, the storm and stress so great that no cable will hold, but they snap all asunder, as is often the case of many a poor soul, then renew thy faith and repentance. 6. Then, stand not now disputing it, but be peremptory and resolute in thy faith and turning to God, let the issue be what it will be. Faith is never nonplussed. 7. Let him trust in the name of the Lord. 8. Wait upon God, thus trusting in His name, in the constant use of all

ordinances and means of comfort. Waiting is indeed but an act of faith further stretched out. 9. Above all things pray, and get others also to pray for thee. 10. Having done all this, you would not rest in ease of conscience but healing. (*Ibid.*) *Trust in the name of the Lord:*—The name of God, that is, God's attributes, and Christ's righteousness do sufficiently, and adequately, answer all wants and doubts, all objections and distresses. Whatsoever our want or temptations be, He hath a name to make supply (Ex. xxxiv. 5, 6). Art thou in misery and great distress? "The Lord merciful." The "Lord," therefore able to help thee; and "merciful," therefore willing. Yea, but thou wilt say, I am unworthy; I have nothing in me to move Him to it. Well, He is "gracious;" now grace is to show mercy freely. Yea, but I have sinned against Him for many years; if I had come in when I was young, mercy might have been shown me. To this He says, I am "long-suffering." But my sins abound in number, and it is impossible to reckon them up, and they abound in heinousness; I have committed the same sins again and again; I have been false to Him, broke promise with Him again and again. His name also answers this objection, He is "abundant in goodness;" He abounds more in grace than thou in sinning. And though thou hast been false again and again to Him, and broke all covenants, yet He is "abundant in truth;" also better than His Word, for He cannot to our capacities express all that mercy that is in Him for us. But I have committed great sins, aggravated with many and great circumstances. He forgives "iniquity, transgression, and sin;" sins of all sorts. But there is mercy thus in Him but for a few, and I may be none of the number. Yes, there is mercy for "thousands." And He "keeps" it; treasures of it lie by Him, and are kept, if men would come and take them. Object what thou canst, His name will answer thee. Needest thou comfort as well as pardon? He is both "Father of mercies" and "God of all comforts" (2 Cor. i. 3). Needest thou peace of conscience, being filled with terrors? He is the "God of peace" (1 Thess. v. 23). But I have a heart empty of grace and holiness, and full of corruptions. He is the "God of all grace" to heal thee, as well as of peace to pardon thee. Needest thou wisdom and direction? He is the "Father of lights," as the apostle says. Is thy heart inconstant and full of double-mindedness? He is "unchangeable" also. Thus all objections that can be made may be answered out of His name. Therefore it is all-sufficient for faith to rest upon. (*Ibid.*) *Darkness and light, and light and darkness:*—One cannot listen to these words without feeling that one needs to distinguish between the appearance and the reality of things. There are peculiarities in the lot of both the righteous and the wicked which baffle our expectations. The sufferings of the godly and the prosperity of the ungodly have always been a puzzle to thoughtful men. However confusing facts of this order may be, they very plainly constitute a most serious part of our earthly test and discipline. I. THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. The character of the righteous. (1) He is animated by devout and reverential feeling towards God—he "feareth the Lord." This inward sentiment of reverence is the living root of all practical godliness. (2) He rules his heart and life by the inspired Word of God—He "obeyeth the voice of His Servant." "His Servant" is the Servant of prediction, the Messiah of promise. 2. His trials. "That walketh in darkness and hath no light." It is literally, "darknesses." The shadows which fall upon our path are not one, but many. It is very startling, that men who revere God Himself, and obey His servants, obey even His chosen Servant of all, should ever "walk in darkness and have no light." Yet that is sometimes their lot. They may not only be in darkness for a short while, but may be called to "walk" in it. Walking denotes, not what is occasional, but what is habitual. Be thankful that you walk not in the pitch darkness of many a poor soul in our day, to whom nothing exists but matter and motion and force. 3. The consolations of the righteous. (1) Study the "name of the Lord." His name declares His nature. (2) Have faith in God. Trust. (3) Leave the issue entirely to the Almighty. Let him "stay upon his God." The word is, "lean upon his God." The illustration is, a weak person leaning all his feebleness on a strong one, and being upheld by his strength. II. THE LIGHT AND THE DARKNESS OF THE WICKED. 1. The illusions of the wicked. Observe their activity. (1) They "kindle a fire." The fire is kindled for the sake of its light, not for the sake of its warmth. The righteous often "walk in darkness and have no light;" not so the wicked. They know how to make their own light. They have great confidence in their own resources. They ply their abilities to banish their ills, and to provide themselves with satisfactions. Men must have at least the semblance of good, if destitute of the reality. The industry of men in the pursuit of

imaginary blessings is very noteworthy, very melancholy, and very pitiful. They "compass themselves with sparks." I am not sure that "sparks" is the exact word that should have been used here. But it seems to be fire in some minute form. The impotence of man is set forth and the inefficiency of his endeavours. He is very laborious. He surrounds himself with his artificial glimmers, and hopes to compensate their feebleness by their multitude. There are no Divine lights in the firmament of his night, and he fancies that the dim and dusky flickerings which his own hands have multiplied about him are sufficient for his needs. 2. The seeming success of the wicked. "Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that ye have kindled." It is as if the Almighty said to wilful and rebellious creatures: "Take your own way. Pursue your dream, and eat the fruits of your folly." The light of the wicked, like the darkness of the righteous, is not single but manifold. They "walk," too, amidst these lights, they live and delight themselves in "the light of their" own fires, and surrounded by "the sparks that they have kindled." 3. The doom of the wicked. "This shall ye have at My hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (1) Men must lie down in sickness. Projects which flashed such alluring brightness grow very pale when health is gone and powers of enjoyment have fled. "Shade me from the lying glare," cries the defrauded sufferer, when the head is sick and the heart is weary. (2) Every man must lie down to die. When that solemn hour arrives, the wasted fingers will enkindle no more lights, and the shrunken limbs move no more amidst them. The whole circle of self-deceptions with which you have encompassed your soul, shall sink and vanish together, like the last glimmer forsakes the expiring wick, and leave only a noisome ash behind. How different are the righteous and the wicked in their darkness! The righteous "leans," the wicked "lies down." "Leaning" is an act of spiritual power; "lying down" in the languors of dissolution, with chilling perspirations crawling on breast and brow, is impotent endurance. The righteous "leans" on God; the wicked sinks helpless and "lies down" to die. The righteous finds succour and salvation; the wicked, sorrow. "Leaning" is the moment of triumph; "lying down," of utter overthrow and ruin. (*H. Batchelor.*)

"*The cloud across the sun:*"—Contrary to the teaching of those who affirm that religion's ways are invariably ways of pleasantness and peace, and that the world's ways are invariably rough and disappointing, it is the religious man who "walketh in darkness, and hath no light," and it is the worldly man whose pathway is illumined and whose prosperity is assured. I. THE TWO CONTRASTED TYPES OF CHARACTER. 1. By "the fear of the Lord" in the language of the Old Testament is meant a religious disposition, combining reverence and love. There are two kinds of fear—one wholesome, the other unwholesome; one the offspring of knowledge, the other of ignorance; one which liberates the soul, the other which brings it into bondage. And it is the reverential fear to which the prophet refers as attached to the character under consideration. Then, He "obeyeth the voice of His Servant." That is a fuller characterization of the godly man, which takes into account conduct as well as disposition. This twofold description completes the picture. The interior life and the outward walk correspond. The character, then, is not that of an empty religious professor. Nor is he a backslider. 2. The character which comes before us in the second half of the text is not so fully described as is that of the godly man in the preceding verse. Nevertheless, the constrast which is suggested enables us to complete the outline without difficulty. It is not necessary that we should think of one who is outwardly and notoriously immoral. But it is necessary that we should think of one who is uninfluenced by the fear of God, and whose character is lacking in all the root-elements of a sincere piety. And how full of suggestion the words "He kindleth a fire"! That is to say, he warms himself from without rather than from within. He contemplates life on its physical and material side only. He finds himself in a world well suited to his requirements and capable of affording him many pleasurable excitements, and so he proceeds to gather together the materials for a good fire. To the superficial observer the difference between the godly man and the worldly man, especially when the latter happens to be respectable and moral, may not be very striking. Yet the difference is vital. It is a difference in kind as well as degree. They belong to different realms. II. THE TWO CONTRASTED WALKS—the one in darkness, the other encompassed with sparks. Health and material prosperity are not necessarily signs of the special favour of God. Nor are sickness and adversity any sure indication of the Divine displeasure. 1. It is the portion of a good man sometimes to have to walk in darkness. (1) There is the darkness of adversity. (2) There

is the darkness of religious doubt. A good man may find himself in this transition period drifting away from the old moorings—drifting away he hardly knows whither. He has to re-make his creed, and during that period of re-making he is compelled to walk, more or less, in darkness. (3) There is the darkness of spiritual drought. The man whose faith is greatly tried is counselled to exercise a stronger faith. 2. In contrast to all this, there is the "walking" of those who walk in the light of the fires of their own kindling. Is this world, with all its absorbing interests, really empty and unsatisfying? No doubt it is, sooner or later. But for the present the majority of those around us are satisfied with it as a sphere of habitation. And supposing there be no God and no hereafter—then one may almost ask whether the worldly have not the advantage over the unworldly, and whether this life, with all its struggles and efforts, is really worth living. But if there be a God and a hereafter; if the kingdom of the soul is as great a reality as the kingdom of the senses; if character is everything—then we are fools indeed if we accept the creed of the materialist, and live the life of the sensualist. There are only two philosophies of life possible to us; and one of them is not a philosophy. The man who follows the first is he who walks in the light of the Sun—the sun's Sun, the great source and fountain of all illumination. The man who follows the second is he who walks in the light of Chinese lanterns and all kinds of pyrotechnic devices, and who in consequence never arrives at the goal. III. THE TWO LIVES WITH THEIR CONTRASTED ENDINGS. 1. There can be no real and lasting success in life apart from God. In the domain of literature, science and art; in the field of material enterprise and industry; in the haunts and abodes of pleasure, how brightly the world's bonfires are burning! How the flames sparkle, and dance and leap! What crowds, what gaiety, what laughter! Soon, however, the laughter will die away, and all that will be left of that brilliant human assemblage on this side the grave will be a few brief epitaphs and a few handfuls of dust. "He shall lie down in sorrow," or as Matthew Henry quaintly paraphrases it, "He shall go to bed in the dark." That is a reminiscence of our childhood. And that is what it all comes to sooner or later, if we read Goethe and Byron instead of our Bible; if we worship the beautiful instead of the holy; if we live the life of the senses instead of the life of the soul. 2. Elsewhere we are told that "to the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness." And again it is said, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." (*T. Sanderson.*) *False and true in character*:—I. THE DARKNESS OF THE TRUE AND THEIR RELIEF. 1. The true have a distinctive principle and conduct. All character is made up of principles and acts. The principle is "fear," not of a crouching serf, but of a loving child—filial reverence; the conduct is, obeying the voice of His Servant—Christ. Here is the true spirit and its true development. Piety may listen to the voice of philosophies, but obeys the voice of Christ. His whole life was a voice. 2. The true have their seasons of darkness—"walketh in darkness." Jacob, Job, Asaph, Jeremiah. The cloud is not spread by a Divine hand over the heart, but rises from the corrupt elements of our moral nature. A dark day is not the sun's fault; he shines in his own great orbit in November as in June; the darkness arises from the vapours of the earth; so with moral gloom—cause not in God, but in us. 3. The true in seasons of darkness have a sure relief—"they trust in the name of the Lord"—in His disposition, and power to help. Christianity a proof of the former, the universe of the latter. II. THE LIGHTS OF THE FALSE AND THEIR RUIN. "Walk in the light of your fire," etc. 1. The false have their lights. Such as general custom, temporal expediency, corrupt religions, pseudo-philosophies. These lights are their guides and comforts in their relations to both worlds. 2. The false will have their ruin. "This shall ye have at My hand." The "candle of the wicked shall be put out." All their lamps, however luminous, shall be quenched in a midnight, without a ray of moon or star. (*Homilist.*) *Darkness the element of trial*:—What is it that is tried in us? Even the same which, it has pleased God to promise, shall be rewarded in us, if we hold it fast—our faith in Christ. And this consists of several parts; which, however, may be summed up in three heads—1. Belief in what He has revealed to us. 2. Belief in what He has promised to us. 3. Belief in what He has required of us. But the text calls our attention particularly to the two latter, as arising out of the former; and in the particular shape of obedience to His commands; and trust in His care of us. But it is plain, that if we are thus tried, there must be the possibility of a different result. There must be a choice; a choice between doing right and doing wrong; between the things which we see and the things which we do not see; between acting for ourselves, and trusting in God to act for us. And accordingly, the text goes on to set before

us the other class of persons, who find themselves in the same darkness and perplexity, but seek a different way out of it. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire," etc. These are the men of the world, the prudent ones; those who will not venture, but will make sure of everything! They will not be kept in the dark! (*R. Scott, M.A.*) *The prophet's sublimity and sarcasm:*—As the holy prophet, here, addresses himself to two very different sorts of men, whom he accordingly describes by two very opposite characters; so he varies his manner of expression, in just proportion to the figure which they make. To the one, his style is serious, and sublime, and full of enlivening encouragement; equal to the dignity of the holy rule they walk by: to the other, like their own way of thinking, disdainful, and sarcastical; laughing at their foolish devices, their unsuccessful projects, and mocking at the bitter calamity, which, with all their conceited wisdom, in the end, they bring upon themselves. (*L. Blackburne, D.D.*) *Light in darkness: true and false:*—In every time of distress or doubt, in every dark, perplexed, and gloomy season, it is as reasonable, as it is natural for every man, who is not wholly lost to all sense or foresight, to cast about, and to look out for any glimpse of light that may suffice to guide him through it. This is a turn which every thinking man will find his mind must surely take in any present misery, or visibly approaching danger. But, here, the righteous and the wicked part asunder; and persevering in the different routes they take, they come no more together. I. THE ONLY TRUE SECURITY, IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION OR DANGER, IS IN THE WAY OF DUTY. II. THERE IS NO WILFUL DEVIATION FROM IT, THAT DOES NOT LEAD TO DESTRUCTION. (*Ibid.*) He who endured the hiding of His Father's countenance when bearing our sins, bids you "stay" on Him as your God. What an illustration of Isa. xlii. 16! (*E. Avriol, M.A.*) *Encouragement and warning:*—I. COMFORT is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace. II. CONVICTION is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves. (*M. Henry.*) *Unwilling darkness:*—The peculiarity of the case of those here stated is, that it is an unwilling darkness. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *F. W. Robertson's experience and counsel:*—Very instructive in this regard is the experience recorded by Frederick W. Robertson, of his striving toward the light, in that terrible spiritual conflict which he fought out among the solitudes of the Tyrol. In one of his letters written there he says: "Some things I am certain of, and these are my *Ursachen*, which cannot be taken away from me. I have got so far as this: Moral goodness and moral beauty are realities, lying at the basis and beneath all forms of the best religious expressions." And, generalizing from his own case, he thus addressed the working-men of Brighton: "It is an awful hour—let him who has passed through it say how awful—when this life has lost its meaning and seems shrivelled into a span; when the grave appears to be the end of all, human goodness nothing but a name, and the sky above this universe a dead expanse, black with the void from which God Himself has disappeared. In that fearful loneliness of spirit, when those who should have been his friends and counsellors only frown upon his misgivings and profanely bid him stifle his doubts, I know but one way in which a man may come forth from his agony scatheless; it is by holding fast to those things which are certain still—the grand, simple landmarks of morality. In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this, at least, is certain. If there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish; better to be chaste than licentious; better to be true than false; better to be brave than to be a coward. Blessed beyond all earthly blessedness is the man who, in the tempestuous darkness of the soul, has dared to hold fast these venerable landmarks. Thrice blessed is he who, when all is cheerless within and without, when the teachers terrify him and his friends shrink from him, has obstinately clung to moral good. Thrice blessed, because his night shall pass into clear, bright day." *Melancholy Christians:*—Serious Christians are apt to be melancholy ones, and those who fear always to fear too much. (*M. Henry.*) *Looking Godwards:*—Believe in God—if only by way of experiment, and for a moment—with all perplexing questions imperially commanded for a time into silence; believe, I mean, in One worthy to be God, the Best conceivable, all that a God ought to be; then remember how such a One has all time and all resources at His command; that He must necessarily be working on a vast scale; and then believe that you, as a living part of one living whole, are necessarily cared for and included in His all-perfect plan. The experiment is, at least, a pleasant one, and quite within our power; and I should not wonder if, in the temporary belief, the idea became as light, which evidences itself, and needs no proof but itself that it

is light. (*H. H. Dobney.*) *God in "the thick darkness:"*—Do not fear to draw near, like Moses, even "to the thick darkness," for God is there. Out of the night is born the morning, and chaos comes before the kosmos. (*Ibid.*) *"Polish up the dark side:"*—"Look on the bright side," said a young man to a friend, who was discontented and melancholy. "But there is no bright side," was his doleful reply. "Very well, then polish up the dark one," said the young man promptly. (*The New Age.*) *Security in the darkness of life:*—I remember once hearing a devout engine-driver relate his religious experience. He said: "The other night when I was on duty there was a dense fog; we could not see a yard before us, but I knew that the permanent way was under us, and every now and then we caught a glimpse of some signal or other, and in time came safely to the journey's end; so," he said, "I know if I am true to the great commandments and promises, God will guide and bring me through." In the darkest hours, when reason and experience utterly fail, remember that the permanent way is there; be true to the line of trust on one side, and obedience on the other, and God will vouchsafe you comforting signals, and in due season bring you to the appointed rest. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Spiritual darkness:*—The tree that waves its branches so freely in the great expanse and spreads out its leafy surface towards heaven, so eager for light and for heat, struck its root in secret underground, in great darkness and bondage. Take heed that you do not undervalue your time of spiritual darkness and conflict. The joy of eternity often strikes its root in very bitterness of spirit. Meekly fulfil all your groaning and patiently abide your time in darkness, "looking unto Jesus." Do you know that you would not so painfully feel your darkness if the Holy Sunlight did not underlie it? The diviner the sunlight at centre, the painfuller is the encompassing night. (*J. Pulsford, D.D.*) *Faith useful in dark days:*—On ancient churches we see the dial, the quaint invention of our fathers; but this is the pathetic failure of the dial, it is of use only as long as the sun shines. But what we want is the faith that helps us when it is dark, when disappointment lacerates the soul, when the grave is being dug, when trials lay us low, and when guilt darkens the day and puts the shutters up on the windows of the heart. (*J. A. Davies, B.D.*) *Facing Godwards:*—In the old myth, Orion whose eyes had been put out whilst he slept on the sea shore, recovered sight by gazing toward the rising sun. If our inner vision has been blinded, and all the grand truths and hopes of life lost to sight, let us turn our blind face toward heaven and keep it there, until He who looseth the bands of Orion turns for us the shadow of death into the morning. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Ver. 11. **Behold, all ye that kindle a fire.**—*A child of darkness walking in light:*—By the "fire" and "the light of their fire" which wicked men are said to walk in, two things must be meant. I. THEIR OWN NATURAL RIGHTEOUSNESS and the sparks and acts thereof. II. THE LIGHT OF OUTWARD COMFORTS from the creatures, which in this world they enjoy, and the sparkling pleasures thereof which they walk in, and content themselves with, neglecting communion with God, being estranged from the life of God, and living without Him in the world. (*T. Goodwin, D.D.*) *Sparks of our own kindling:*—Our mistake is, not that we seek happiness (for to do so is inherent in the constitution of our nature), but that we seek it from fictitious and artificial sources, which are not naturally calculated to yield it. The many fictitious sources, from which men seek to derive happiness, are compared to a fire kindled, and sparks struck out, by way of relieving the darkness of the night. It is, of course, implied in the metaphor, that true happiness, the real and adequate complement of man's nature, resembles the Divinely-created and golden sunlight. I. THIS COMPARISON DOES NOT LEAD US TO DENY THAT PLEASURE AND GRATIFICATION OF A CERTAIN KIND ARE DERIVABLE FROM WORLDLY SOURCES. Just as man can relieve himself in great measure from the discomfort and inconvenience of natural darkness, by kindling a fire and surrounding himself with sparks, so can he alleviate, to a certain extent, the instinctive sense of disquietude and dissatisfaction, so irksome to him at intervals of leisure, by the various enjoyments which life has to offer. II. THE DRAWBACKS OF WORLDLY ENJOYMENTS. 1. Unsatisfactoriness inheres in their very nature, inasmuch as they are all more or less artificial. They are miserable substitutes, which man has set up to stand him in stead of that true happiness, which is congenial to his nature, and adapted to his wants. The light of the sun is nature's provision for man. That light answers all the purposes for which light is required, far more beautifully, as well as far more simply, than the most splendid artificial illumination. But the shedding abroad of the golden sunlight is not

dependent on man's will, or within the compass of his ability. Effectually to remove the pall of darkness from the face of nature, and to spread the morning upon the mountains, is the prerogative of the Divine Being. Whereas in the alleviation of the darkness, man has a share. He can kindle a fire, and compass himself about with sparks. During the period of the sun's absence, he can replace his light, by the sorry substitute of torch and taper. The glare, however, which these shed around, is not like the genial, cheering, cherishing light, which proceeds from the great luminary which rules the day. It exercises no quickening influence on vegetable life,—its clear shining brings not out the bloom and perfume of the flower, nor the verdure of the tender grass, nor sends a thrill of joy through the whole realm of nature. Now, every fact which has here been stated, in regard to things natural, finds its counterpart in things spiritual. 2. The fitful character of the enjoyment derived from worldly sources renders it comparable to a fire and sparks struck out. The glow of a kindled fire is not equable. It casts a flickering and uncertain light, now smouldering beneath the fuel which feeds it, now bursting forth into bright and vivid flashes. Thus it presents us with a lively emblem of worldly joy, which is subject to repeated alternations of revival and decay, and whose high pitch can be sustained, only for a very short period of time. Not so the peace and pleasantness derived from walking with God. If it be not a light so dazzling as that which is sometimes shed abroad by the kindled firebrands of worldly joys, it is at least subject to no such variations of lustre. 3. A fire requires continually to be fed with fresh fuel, if its brilliancy and warmth are to be maintained. Hence it becomes an apt emblem of the delusive joy of this world, falsely called happiness, which is only kept alive in the worldling's heart by the fuel of excitement. 4. But perhaps the chief drawback of the worldling's so-called happiness is that it is consistent with so much anxiety—that it is subject to frequent intrusions from alarm, whenever a glimpse of the future untowardly breaks in upon the mind. And possibly this feature of it too is symbolized in the prophetic imagery, which is here employed to denote it. It is in the night-time, when the kindled fire glows upon the hearth, and man pursues his employments by the light of torch and taper, that apprehensions visit his mind, and phantom forms are conjured up which scare the ignorant and the superstitious. Would that the forebodings of the worldling were equally groundless with the fears of the superstitious! What makes the Christian's joy so intrinsically preferable to his, is that it can endure the survey of the hour of death, and of the day of judgment. (*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.*) *False religions*:—I. MAN CREATES THEM. "Ye have kindled the fires." What are they? There are at least five false religions that prevail in Christendom, and under the name of Christianity. 1. The religion of creed. A sound creed is essential to a sound religion, but is not itself a sound religion. 2. The religion of moods. Desires for heaven, dread of hell, sensuous sympathy with Christ's sufferings, these are the religious "sparks." 3. The religion of ordinance. 4. The religion of proxyism. Many are depending upon services. 5. The religion of merit. All these are false religions prevalent amongst us, as man is the creator of them. II. HEAVEN ALLOWS THEM. "Walk in the light," etc. 1. The permission is strange. 2. The permission is significant. (1) It shows God's respect for that freedom with which He has endowed human nature. (2) It suggests that in giving the Gospel, He has given all that is necessary for man to get the right religion. III. MISERY FOLLOWS THEM. "This shall ye have at My hands," etc. Death will put out all false light from the soul. Who shall imagine the "sorrow" that follows the extinction of all the religious lights of the soul! 1. There is the sorrow of bitter disappointment; 2. of poignant remorse; 3. of black despair. All hopes of improvement gone. No religion will beam on with increased radiance up to and beyond the grave for ever, but the religion of Christ. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER LI.

VERS. 1–8. Hearken to Me.—*The thrice "Hearken":*—These paragraphs are exceedingly dramatic. We become conscious that we are approaching a revelation of unparalleled sublimity which shall be in Scripture what heart or brain or eye is in the human body. And as we consider the thrice "Hearken" of this paragraph, and the thrice "Awake" of the succeeding one, we realize that we are entering the presence-chamber of the profoundest mysteries of love and redemption. The people, notwithstanding the promises of deliverance from exile and the summons to depart, seemed unable to believe that they were destined to become again a great nation, or that Zion's wastes would be repaired! Already the Servant of Jehovah had sought to answer their anxious questionings, and reassure them by announcing a love that would not let them go. And in these words He betakes Himself to the same strain. He prefaces His words by the thrice-repeated "Hearken," addressed to those "that follow after righteousness" in the first verse; and to "those that know righteousness" in the seventh. These are always the stages in the development of character: they that follow presently possess. I. THE LESSONS OF RETROSPECT. It was for her encouragement that Israel was primarily directed to this retrospect. Let us recount the steps of Abraham's pruning, on which God lays stress in saying, "When he was but one, I called him." 1. He stood alone. First, Terah died, after having started with him for the Land of Promise, emblem of those who in old age start on the pilgrimage of faith and hope, not too much tied by the conservatism of nature, or the traditions of the past. Then Lot dropped away, and went down to Sodom; and it must have been difficult for the old man, as he saw the retreating forms of his camp followers, to be wholly unmoved. Then Sarah's scheme miscarried, and Hagar was thrust from his tents with her child. Lastly, his Isaac was laid upon the altar. By successive strokes the shadows grew deeper and darker; and he stood alone, face to face with God and His purpose. But the fire that burned in his heart rose higher, shone brighter, and has ignited myriads with its flame. 2. His faith was sorely tried. 3. His history is the type of God's dealings with men. Not once nor twice in the record of the Church the cause of truth has been entrusted to a tiny handful of defenders, who have deemed it forlorn or lost. Sir Walter Scott's picture of the apparently empty glen suddenly teeming with armed men at the sign of the chieftain has often had its counterpart in the great army which has arisen from the life, or words, or witness, of a single man. Art thou a cypher? but thou mayest have God in front of thee! Art thou but a narrow strait? yet the whole ocean of Godhead is waiting to pour through thee! The question is not what thou canst or canst not do, but what thou art willing for God to do. II. THE IMPERISHABLENESS OF SPIRITUAL QUALITY. In the following verses there is a marvellous contrast between the material and the unmaterial, the temporal and the eternal. The gaze of the people is directed to the heavens above and the earth beneath. Those heavens seem stable enough. Yet they shall vanish like a puff of smoke borne down the wind. And as for the earth, it shall wax old. But amid the general wreck, spiritual qualities will remain imperishably the same. "My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished." 1. This shall be for ever true of God. God will be the same in His feelings and dealings towards us amid the crash of matter and the wreck of worlds as He is to-day. The Jews took great comfort in the thought of God's unchangeableness. 2. This shall be for ever true of man. When we partake of God's righteousness and assimilate it, we acquire a permanence which defies time and change. What a lesson is given in these words of the relative value of things! III. THE IMPOTENCE OF MAN. These exiled Jews hardly dared to hope that they would be able to break away from their foes. To us, as to the exiles in Babylon, the Divine word comes, "Fear ye not, neither be dismayed" (ver. 7). The paragraph closes with an application of the word used by the great Servant of Himself. "The moth shall eat them up," we heard Him saying to Himself; "they shall all wax old as a garment" (chap. l. 9). But now we are bidden to apply those same expressions to ourselves (ver. 8). With these assurances behind us, we may face a world in arms. Men may try to wear out the saints, but they must fail. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *A bright light in deep shades:*—The remembrance of God's mercy in the past is helpful to us in many ways. Isaiah was led by the Spirit of God to admonish the Israelites to look back that they might be cheered and encouraged in a time of gloom and sadness, and that they might be

animated with fresh confidence in God's power to bring them up again from their sad condition, as they thought of all that He had done for them in times past, when they were equally low, or when, peradventure, they were even in a worse plight than they were at present. It is a great thing for people to be encouraged. I. WE SHALL EXPOUND THE TEXT IN ITS APPLICATION TO ISRAEL LITERALLY. They are bidden to look back to the origin of their nation, in order that they may be comforted. Abraham was the stock out of which the nation of Israel came. Moreover, the man was well stricken in years. As for his wife, she also, it is said, was barren; and yet from these two, who seemed the least likely of all flesh and blood, God was pleased to create a people countless as the stars. Abraham was not a man in a commanding position, with large armies at his feet, who could make a show in the world. He was a dweller in tents, a Bedouin sheik, wandering through the plains of Palestine, yet was he never injured; for God had sent forth a secret mandate, which fell, though they knew it not, upon men's hearts. Now, the prophet turns to the Israelites, and says, "You say God can never restore us, we have been thinned out by innumerable invasions, the sword of war hath slain the tribes, Judah and Israel can never rise again. But are there not more left of you than there were at first? There were but two, Abraham and Sarah, that bare you, and yet God made you a people. Can He not make you a people again?" etc. The thoughts which would be awakened in the heart of a Jew by these reflections would be eminently consolatory. They ought to be consolatory to us now with regard to the Jewish people. We are encouraged from the very origin of Israel to hope that great things shall yet be done for her. II. Our text may be used in reference to the CONDITION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE WORLD. 1. I know many of the people of God who scarcely dare look for brighter times, because they say the people of God are few. Was not the Church very small at the first? It could all be contained in one upper room. Has it not been very small many times since then? But did not the Lord strengthen His Church in the apostolic times? And, in the dark ages, how very speedily did the time of the singing of birds come! God had but to speak by His servant Luther, and brave men came to His side, and right soon His Church sprang up. 2. But, is it possible, you say, while the Church of God in these days possesses so few men of influence? Did not inspiration say, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty have been called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world"? Do ye suppose that God has changed His plans, or that men's hearts have changed their bias? 3. But alas, saith one, I see grave cause for sorrow, for in these days many have departed from the faith, and truth lies in the streets bespattered. There have been eras and epochs in which gross heresies spread a contagion through the entire Church. 4. Again, I hear the voice of lamentation, "It is not merely that error spreads in the land, but the Church is lukewarm in these times." The Church has been in a like listless state before, and out of that languid condition God has roused her up and brought her forth. 5. There is a complaint made by some, and I fear there is some truth in it, that we have not many valiant ministers now-a-days. But, for all that, there have been periods in the Church's history when she lacked for men of valour, and God has found them. Why should He not find them again? III. OUR TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS INSTRUCTIVE TO OURSELVES. Our experience varies. It sometimes happens to men who are truly saved, that they fall from the condition which they occupied when they were in their first love. Your present condition is not what your past one was, and yet the Lord visited you when in your lost estate. There is the same God to-day as there was when first you sought Him. IV. OUR TEXT MAY BE FITTINGLY USED TO ENCOURAGE OUR HOPE FOR OTHERS. Do you say of some sinner, "I am afraid his is a hopeless case"? look unto the rock whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Remember again, that that poor sinner whose soul you are going to seek is where the best and brightest of the saints were. And, recollect, that that sinner you are going to speak with is, to-day, where those that are in heaven once were. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The benefit of reflection:*—It is the duty, and will be for the benefit of every true servant of God, occasionally to reflect, with due seriousness, on his own original state, on the rise and progress of religion in his own soul, and of the experience which he has thus individually had of the Divine power, goodness and mercy. I. THE PERSONS HERE ADDRESSED. Those who "follow after righteousness" and "seek the Lord." How exactly does this description accord to the true people of God under the Christian Church? II. THE EXHORTATION ADDRESSED TO THEM. "Look unto the rock," etc. The meaning is obvious, "Look back unto yourselves. Consider what you once were; in what a depth of misery you were originally sunk. Reflect on the natural hardness

of your heart: on its insensibility to spiritual things; on its dreadful alienation from God." See this state of things exemplified—1. In your original conversion to God. 2. In your subsequent conduct towards God. Since the time in which you first knew Him in truth, and gave yourself up to serve Him in the gospel of His Son, what has been the state of your heart, of its affections, its tempers, and its dispositions? Have all these been uniformly such as this surrender and profession imply and require? Application: What lessons do these reflections teach? 1. Humility and self-abasement. 2. Patience, contentment and resignation. 3. The necessity of a continual dependence on Divine grace to work in you both to will and to do. 4. Hope and encouragement. But the subject admits also of another less exclusive application. It furnishes one lesson of general importance: for it teaches us how holy and practical in its tendency is true, evangelical religion. (*E. Cooper.*) *Seeking souls directed:*—All the invitations and exhortations of the Word of God for spiritual blessings are accompanied with a description of character. I. THE WORSHIPPERS DESCRIBED. 1. These characters who follow after and seek after must be spiritually alive. It would be strange to talk of a corpse in a churchyard following after or seeking any favours at our hands. As strange would it be to talk of a post in the street following after us, and pursuing us for the same purpose. 2. There is a stirring in the living persons that begins to render them somewhat conspicuous. Wherever there is this stirring inquiry, this dissatisfaction with self, and a stirring to be right for eternity, there is life Divine. 3. Then, there must be sincerity. "Then shall ye find Me, when ye seek Me with your whole heart." 4. We will go on to notice their eager following after righteousness. It must be a righteousness that will justify. A righteousness that will sanctify. A righteousness that will glorify. It is imperishable. 5. Follow on to the next description of character. "Ye that seek the Lord." Mark a few characteristics of these seekers. They seek Him privately. They seek Him in the place where His honour dwelleth. In His Word. Perseveringly. Seeking souls are well known in heaven, earth and hell. II. THE EXHORTATION GIVEN. "Look unto the rock," etc. (*J. Irons.*) *The Lord's people:*—I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE. They "follow after righteousness." If you ask what righteousness is, I call upon you to behold Jesus! He is righteousness. The Lord's people "follow after righteousness." They therefore follow Him. Far better for a man to strive to love Christ than to be trying to lay down certain rules of morality. They "follow after righteousness." Does not this imply that they cannot find it in themselves? Some follow after righteousness in fear. Others with many slips. The Lord's people follow after righteousness with humility. They follow after righteousness in love. Willingly. Perseveringly. I saw a steamer on the canal drawing after it three large boats. The steamer contained its own motive power, but had there been an engine and boiler in each of those boats they also would have gone on to Liverpool urged on by inward strength. Well, we follow after righteousness, not because Christ has placed some band between Himself and us, but because He has Himself entered our hearts. Christ is the living and moving power in our souls. II. A KINDLY REMEMBRANCE. The Lord speaks very kindly to those who seek but have not yet found Him. Many are seeking the Lord without a light. Some may seek the Lord in unbelief. Some in a wrong way. Somebody else replies, "Ah, sir, I have no spiritual life, such as I had once." Well, who gave it to you in days gone by? The Lord. And will He not restore it again? III. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. Is your soul cast down? Well, remember what God has done for you. Did He not hew you from the rock of the world? 2. If God has hewn us from the rock we ought to hope for all humanity. (*W. Birch.*) **Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn.**—*Looking to beginnings:*—1. Look back to beginnings; look along the line from the beginning to the sensations of to-day. A man should have his whole self before him in making his forecast of the future. His whole self should be a Bible, chaptered and versed, well numbered and properly displayed, having its Genesis, and running straight on through prophecy and tragedy, and music and Gospel, into mysterious Apocalypse. You have expurgated this life Bible, killed the promises and Psalms, and have only failures left. 2. Take in all your life: if God has made so much of you, He can make still more. The miracle is not in the great umbrageous tree; it is in that little green blade that pierces the earth and looks like a thing that means to pray. It is not the universe, but the molecule, that is a miracle to me. Looking back at what we were, it is easy to believe and yearn to be more. 3. If God has made so much of you, he can make as much of others. Therefore, do not contemn any man. God shows us in cathedrals what can be done with all stones; He shows us in gardens what can be made of all

waste places. I do not read that there are two rocks out of which men are dug—one a very low and disreputable rock, and the other a very high and grand piece of masonry. We are all from the same rock and the same pit; we all have one Father, and we have all suffered the catastrophe of a common apostasy. Have pity upon those who are far behind. 4. Whence are ye hewn—digged; not whence ye hewed, digged yourselves. Are you well educated? It is because others made the way plain and smooth. Are you successful? It is the Lord thy God giveth thee power to get wealth. How much you owe father, mother! As we rise, the account grows, and if God do not forgive us we are lost. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Comparisons* are odious; comparisons are highly profitable. They are odious if prompted by malice or meanness. A genius who had risen to a seat in the Commons was reminded by a shallow aristocrat in the lobby that he had formerly been his servant. "Well," retorted the man of talent, "and did I not serve you well?" Such comparisons are hateful; but they may also prove beneficial as promoting due humility and appreciative thankfulness. Take the case of Paul, who, though an apostle of very exceptional ability, would remind himself that he was the chief of sinners. As though he had said, "Now, Paul, look unto the rock whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you were digged." (*W. J. Acomb.*) *Spiritual statuary:*—It is doubtless serviceable for each of us, however devoted and pure, to be now and then presented with a photograph of our former selves. We can thus see what we should have remained if grace had not refined us. We can measure our growth and development. We can certainly better understand the obligations arising from improved conditions. I. THE RETROSPECT THAT WAS RECOMMENDED to this godly remnant of Israel. In all ages have existed those to whom God could thus appeal. Their characteristics are ever the same—viz. the endeavour to live righteously and the instinctive craving for a fuller knowledge of God. Such were here bidden to recall the period when their great father, Abraham, had been separated from heathen surroundings, led, and instructed by the Divine Spirit till worthy of the appellation, Friend of God. The nation had been a stone cut out of the mountain without hands and fashioned into something like beauty and grace. In regard to individual stones, it would appear that the work of the Divine statuary is threefold—1. Detachment from the common mass of material. A stone has no ability to leap from its place. The quarryman must by pick and gunpowder and hammer set the granite free. There is grace at the outset, either in national or individual life. People need graciously saving. You have to be rescued, separated from the power of death, lifted from the sphere of human passion. To do this, various agencies are employed—some almost dynamic, others more gentle. 2. Moulding by religious education and attrition of association. Quarried stones need moulding, whether granite, limestone or freestone. Hammer and chisel must be applied. So, when detached must expect to submit to peculiar processes. Some stones necessitate great labour; others can easily be wrought to any form. Heaps of stones about and in every one an angel!—only the angel requires to be modelled out, chiselled out, filed out. We can't see the angel; God can. None can be a holy person without pain. Salvation is not the deed of a moment, but is a gradual work, stage by stage, here a little and there a little. 3. Vivification of spiritual faculties by the Holy Ghost. Many of you have been extracted from the quarry and rough-hewn by Christian civilization; but you require the grandest thing of all, the breath of spiritual life. Like the child-delighting marionettes that are so skilfully moved by invisible machinery, but which have no appreciation of the part they play, you may be actuated by the forces of custom, or ambition, or fear, but remain dead to all sensations of a purely spiritual nature. II. THE PURPOSES OF THE SUGGESTED RETROSPECTION. Judging from the context, the intention was—1. To promote humility. 2. To stimulate hopefulness. We instinctively argue, "If so much, why not more?" God has always some better thing in store for us. Have we not a sure word of prophecy which declares that Christ is able to present each one of us faultless before the throne? (*Ibid.*) *Characters: unhewn and hewn:*—Shakespeare is given to present abstract ideas in concrete forms to suit the ordinary obtuse Englishman. Thus we understand Caliban. This low-type creature stands before us destitute of moral sense; his strongest motive to action fear of punishment; he hates unreasonably the best of beings; he luxuriates in grossest vice; his brain so feeble that he kneels to a drunkard. Now the national poet has contrasted this brute-man with Prospero, the refined courtier, the gentle father, the magnanimous Duke of Milan, thus exhibiting the diverse effects of Christian culture and heathen neglect. In one you behold the rough, angular, unhewn block; in the other the exquisitely moulded statue. To

assimilate them, what a complicated miracle would be requisite! This is the mission of our Lord and Redeemer. (*Ibid.*) *Nature and grace*:—It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth to consider what they were by their first birth; how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions; and how dirty the hole of the pit out of which we were digged! The consideration hereof should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of Divine grace. (*M. Henry.*) *A humble origin: John Bunyan*:—"I was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all families in the land. I never went to school to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's house in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen. Nevertheless, I bless God that by this door He brought me into the world to partake of the grace and life that is by Christ in His Gospel." This is the account given of himself and his origin by a man whose writings have for two centuries affected the spiritual opinions of the English race in every part of the world more powerfully than any book or books, except the Bible. (*J. A. Froude.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **Look unto Abraham your father.**—*Abraham, or the Christian's rock*:—I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH ABRAHAM. 1. God "called him alone." How merciful this call! Our own call to renounce this world, and to seek a better, even a heavenly country, is to be traced, like Abraham's, to the undeserved mercy of our heavenly Father. 2. The Lord "blessed" Abraham. And has He not "blessed" us? Has He not given to us many of the blessings of this life? And, what is much more than these, has He not redeemed us from sin and misery by Jesus Christ our Lord? 3. The Lord "increased" him. The worldly possessions of Abraham were many. But Abraham was increased further in his posterity. But his spiritual descendants are yet more numerous. So likewise is the faithful Christian, the spiritual child of Abraham, "increased;" not indeed, it may be, in this world's riches and honours, but in spiritual wealth and dignity. II. THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF ABRAHAM. 1. His faith. Let us look to Abraham as an example in this point of view. 2. His obedience. Let no one whose works contradict his profession of faith suppose himself to be a believer in God. (*W. D. Johnston, M.A.*) *Sarah*:—That Sarah is mentioned chiefly for rhythmical effect may be inferred from the writer's now confining what he says to Abraham alone. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Hearken and look; or, encouragement for believers*:—The second verse contains my actual text. It is the argument by which faith is led to look for the blessings promised in the third verse. It is habitual with some persons to spy out the dark side of every question or fact: they fix their eyes upon the "waste places," and they study them till they know every ruin, and are familiar with the dragons and the owls. They sigh most dolorously that the former times were better than these, and that we have fallen upon most degenerate days. The habit of looking continually towards the widernesses is injurious because it greatly discourages; and anything that discourages an earnest worker is a serious leakage for his strength. My text has near to it three times, "Hearken to Me." You have listened long enough to dreary suggestions from within, to gloomy prophecies from desponding friends, to the taunts of foes, and to the horrible whisperings of Satan: now hearken to Him who promises to make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord. O ye whose eyes are quick to discover evil, there are other sights in the world besides waste places and deserts, and hence my text hath near to it twice over the exhortation, "Look"—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn;" "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you;" for there we may find comfort. I. We shall first look towards Abraham that we may see in him THE ORIGINAL OF GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE. 1. The founder of God's first people was called out of a heathen family. Abraham, the founder of the great system in which God was pleased to reveal Himself for so long a time, and to whose seed the oracles of God were committed, was a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, the city of the moon-god. We cannot tell to what extent he was actually engrossed in the superstition of his fathers, but it is certain that the family was years afterwards tainted with idolatry; for in Jacob's day the teraph was still venerated, and Rachel stole her father's images. Abraham, therefore, was called out from the place of his birth, and from the household to which he belonged, that in a separated condition, as a worshipper of the one God, he might keep the truth alive in the world. Why, then, might not the Lord, if the cause of truth were this day

reduced to its utmost extremity, again raise up a Church out of one man? "Ah," you say, "but men are not called now, as Abraham was, by miraculous calls from heaven." Where ordinary means are so plentiful wisdom resorts not to signs and wonders. The same Spirit who called Abraham by a supernatural voice can call others by the word of truth. "Ah," say you, "but Abraham was naturally a man of noble mould. Where do you find such a princely spirit as his?" I answer, Who made him? He that made him can make another like him. 2. Look again, and observe that Abraham was but one man. If we should ever be reduced, as we shall not be, to one man, yet by one man will God preserve His Church, and work out His great purposes. Think of the power for good or evil which may be enshrined in a single human life. 3. This one man was a lone man. He had no prestige of parentage, rank or title. The fulfilment of his calling rested on his loneliness; for he must get away from his kindred, and wander up and down with his flocks, even as the Church of God now does, dwelling in a strange land, and feeding her flock apart. "I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." If in the town or district where you live you seem to lose all your helpers; if they die one by one, and it seems as if nobody would be left to you, still persevere, for it is the lone man that God will bless. 4. He was a man who had to be stripped yet further. He must come away from his kindred and his father's house, and must dwell in Palestine till the promised seed was born. But how long he waited for the expected heir! What a feast there was that Isaac was born, filling the house with laughter. But he must die! The grand old man is sure that even if he should actually slay his son at God's command the promise would somehow be kept. Look, then, to Abraham your father, and say is he not the grandest human representative of the great Father God Himself, who in the fulness of time spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all? If in all these trials Abraham was yet blessed, and God's purposes were accomplished in him, can we not believe that the same God can work by us also, despite our downcastings and humiliations? Here is the sum and substance of this first head of my discourse: in looking to the rock whence we are hewn, we have to see the Lord working the greatest results from apparently inadequate causes. This teaches us to cease from calculating means, possibilities and probabilities, for we have to deal with God, with whom all things are possible. II. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS CHOSEN MAN. The text says, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you," and it must mean—consider him and see what he was, that you may learn from him. His grand characteristic was his faith. Abraham's faith was such that it led him to obedience. The man of faith is God's man. Why? Because faith is the only faculty of our spirit which can grasp God's ideal. Faith, too, has a great power of reception, and therein lies much of her adaptation to the Divine purpose. Then, again, faith always uses the strength that God gives her. Faith, too, can wait the Lord's time and place. God loveth faith and blesseth it, because it giveth Him all the glory. III. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THAT ONE MAN. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Something, surely, is expected of the children of such a man as Abraham. Because we are the seed of Abraham, the apostle declares that the blessing of Abraham has come upon us also. What is it? It is a covenant favour that belongs to all who are the servants of God by faith. Here is the substance of it: "Surely blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee." The blessing is attended with multiplying. The blessing of the Church is the increase of the Church. The success of truth is the battle of the Lord, and the increase of His Church is according to His own promise; therefore in quietness we may possess our souls. IV. OUR POSITION BEFORE ABRAHAM'S GOD. "Look to Abraham, but only as to the rock from which the Lord quarried His people:" your main thought must be Jehovah Himself. "I, I called him alone, and blessed him." Let us joyfully recollect that the Lord our God has not changed, nay, not in one jot or tittle. "His arm is not shortened that He cannot save," etc. The covenant of God has not changed. Read the covenant words, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven," etc. But there is this also to be added, that this work which we desire the Lord to do is in some respects even less than that which He has done with Abraham. What ask we? Not that He should begin with one man to build up a nation, or create a Church? No, but that Zion being builded, He should comfort her, and cause her waste places to rejoice. What marvellous things hath God done on the face of the earth since Abraham's days!—the stupendous marvel of incarnation; the

wondrous work of redemption, the highest, grandest, Divinest achievement of the Deity—all this is done; what may we not expect after this? You know more of God than Abraham could know. Trust Him, at least up to the level of the patriarch. How shall we forge an excuse if we do not? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 3. **For the Lord shall comfort Zion.**—*Zion comforted:*—I. THERE IS A LOW ESTATE, OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSAL CHURCH, AND OF PARTICULAR BRANCHES OF IT, AND LIKEWISE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. II. THERE ARE GRACIOUS PROMISES OF REVIVAL, of restored fertility and productiveness. III. THE MODE IN WHICH THESE BLESSED EFFECTS MAY BE LOOKED AND SOUGHT FOR. When the eye of faith is directed towards Christ, when we believe in Him as the Lord our righteousness, when the prayer of faith ascends to heaven, when the ear hearkens to the inspired Word, then we may expect that God will be gracious to His inheritance, and refresh it when it is weary. We may not look for the supplies of the Spirit of God unless we earnestly ask for them. (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*) *The depression, prosperity and delight of the Church:*—Taking these words as the prophet's statement with regard to the spiritual Church of God, under the appellation of Zion, we propose from these words to call attention—I. TO THE DEPRESSION OF THE CHURCH. 1. This depression arises from the small number of those who belong to the Church. 2. The depression consists also in the want of spiritual vigour on the part of those who belong to the Church. II. TO THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH. Observe—1. The source to which the prosperity of the Church is assigned. "For the Lord shall comfort Zion," etc. Christianity is, emphatically, the ministration of the Spirit. 2. The nature of the prosperity by which the Church will be distinguished. What is the precise import of this comforting of Zion, this comforting of her waste places, making her wilderness like the garden of Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord? Here you will observe, that a vast augmentation of the numbers of the Church must plainly be regarded as included. A great purification and refinement in the characters of those who do pertain to the Church will signalize those future days. 3. The means to be adopted by the true friends of the Church in order that the period of this predicted prosperity may arrive. III. TO THE DELIGHT OF THE CHURCH. "Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." This emotion may properly arise from contemplating—1. The wonderful change which shall have been accomplished in the condition of the Church itself. 2. The connection between the prosperity of the Church and the glorification of God. 3. The connection between the prosperity of the Church and the happiness of mankind. Conclusion: 1. Our first anxiety, of course, must be, that you may individually belong to the Church of God yourselves. 2. What we next desire of you is, that you will labour in all the appointed means and instrumentalities by which the prosperity of the Church of God is to be secured. (*J. Parsons.*) *Zion comforted:*—(1) The land of bliss is (2) full of human beings (3) in festive frame and active enjoyment. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *A cheerful prospect:*—I. HEAVENLY COMFORT PROMISED. This is a promise to God's Church. The Church of God—captured as it has been by Christ from the world, chosen to be the palace where He dwells, builded together for a temple wherein He is worshipped—is frequently called "Zion." 1. The object of this comfort. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Well He may, for she is His chosen. "The Lord has chosen Zion." He would have those upon whom His choice is fixed be glad and happy. 2. The Lord Himself is the Comforter. There are sorrows for which there is no solace within the reach of the creature; there is a ruin which it would baffle any mortal to retrieve. Happy for us that the Omnipotent comes to our aid. 3. How does the Lord propose to comfort Zion? If you read the verse through you will find it is by making her fertile. The true way to comfort the Church is to build her synagogues, restore the desolation of former times, to sow her fields, plant her vineyards, make her soil fruitful, call out the industry of her sons and daughters, and fill them with lively, ardent zeal. 4. The promise is given in words that contain an absolute pledge. He "shall" and He "will" are terms that admit of no equivocation. II. THE MOURNFUL CASES FAVOURED. "He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." 1. Are there not to be found in the visible Church persons whose character is here vividly depicted? (1) There are those who once were fruitful, but are now comparable to wastes. I remember one Monday afternoon, when we had been waiting upon the Lord in prayer ever since seven o'clock in the morning, that there came a most remarkable wave of prayer over the assembly. And then two backsliders got up

and prayed one after the other. According to their own account, they had been very bad fellows indeed, and had sorely transgressed against God; but there they were, broken-hearted and fairly broken down. It was a sight to make angels rejoice as their tears flowed. Certainly their sobs and cries touched the hearts of all of us who were assembled. I thought to myself, "Then God is blessing us, for when backsliders come back it is a proof that God has visited His people." (2) Then a second department of the promise is, "He will make her wilderness like Eden." I take the wilderness here to be a place of scanty vegetation. Oh, how many there are in the Church of God who are just like that! They are Christians, but sorry Christians they are. (3) A third character is implied in the desert—the deserted places where no man dwells, where the traveller does not care to linger. How many professors of religion answer to this description of the soil! They are like deserts. You not only never did bring forth fruit, but you never concerned yourself to do so. 2. Ask ye now, what does the Lord say He will do for them? He says that He will make the wilderness like Eden. You know what Eden was. It was the garden of the earth in the days of primeval purity. So the Lord says that when He visits His Church He will make these poor backsliders, these immature Christians, these nominal professors, like Eden. Moreover, as if to strengthen the volume of His grace and of our hope, He says that He will make her desert like the garden of the Lord. He shall come to you and delight your heart and soul with His converse. III. CERTAIN DESIRABLE RESULTS WHICH ARE PREDICTED. "Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." You notice the doubles. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry, perhaps, necessitated them. Still I remember how John Bunyan says that "all the flowers in God's garden bloom double." We are told of "manifold mercies," that is, mercies which are folded up one in another, so that you may unwrap them and find a fresh mercy enclosed in every fold. Here we have "joy and gladness, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." The Lord multiplies His grace. Oh, what a delightful thing must a visitation from God be to His Church! Without God all she can do is to groan. Nay, she will not always do that. She sometimes indulges a foolish conceit, and says: "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." After that will soon be heard the hooting of dragons and the cry of owls. Let God visit His Church, and there is sure to be thanksgiving and the voice of melody. This is the mark of a revived Church everywhere. New impetus is given to the service of song. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **The garden of the Lord.**—*The garden of God* (for children):—Here and elsewhere Holy Scripture pictures a gathering of the upright and holy as a garden, and Christly people, whether men or children, as the trees and plants and flowers in such a garden. In His garden—I. GOD WILL HAVE NO WEEDS. This reminds us—1. What a number of evils must be destroyed. Idleness, falsehood, cowardice, disobedience, etc., are weeds that must be plucked up and destroyed. 2. The ways by which evils are to be destroyed. (1) Like weeds, they are to be plucked up and burnt. There must be no half measures in dealing with sin. We must get at the roots and then burn the whole. (2) Like weeds, they must be cleared by better life taking their place. In New Zealand, where the hoe of the settlers failed to destroy the rank vegetation that had rooted there for centuries, they have successfully adopted the plan of planting among it our common English clover. And as it grows it actually is rooting out the formidable flax-weed with its fibrous leaves and strong woody roots. So truth, courage, love, will root out lying, cowardice, selfishness. We get rid of evil from hearts and lives by "the expulsive power of a new affection." II. THERE IS A GREAT VARIETY OF FLOWERS. Rich rose, stately tulip, sweet lily of the valley, etc.—a thousand varieties all helping us to understand the famous preacher who said, "Flowers are the sweetest things God ever made and forgot to put a soul into." So there is great variety in the virtues; no monotony in Christian character. There are virtues that, like lofty trees and brilliant flowers, make heroes and martyrs. And there are others like flowers with tiny petals and delicate tints. St. Francis of Sales said, "How carefully we should cherish the little virtues which spring up at the foot of the Cross." What are they? some one asked him. "Humility, meekness, kindness, simplicity, candour," he replied. III. HE HIMSELF HAS JOY. Over true souls He rejoices. The prophet says, God rejoices "over them with singing." God seems to sing over those of whom He says, as of David, "a man after God's own heart;" as of Daniel, "O man greatly beloved;" as of the Lord Jesus Christ, "My well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." IV. ALL THE BEAUTY OF ALL THE FLOWERS IS TO BE TRACED TO HIS CARE. 1. He is the Owner. 2. He is the

Sower. 3. He is the Gardener—Christ called God the Husbandman. 4. He is the Source of all life and beauty. For He is Sun, and Wind: is as dew—and showers also. (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*)

Vers. 4–6. **Hearken unto Me, My people.**—*The absolute in human history:*—Time works mighty changes in human life. Amidst the ceaseless whirl of mutation, is there nothing unchangeable? Is life made up entirely of volatile contingencies? Has it no absolute elements? Oh, for a rock in this ebbing sea, where we might stand secure as the wreck of years floats by! This Scripture responds to our questions, and meets our aspirations. The word "law" designates God's revelation; "judgment" and "righteousness" are interchangeable terms, expressing the one idea —rectitude. The great truths, therefore, enfolded in this rich oriental garb, are that rectitude and salvation are the elements of God's revelation; and that these elements are the absolute in human history. I. THEY ARE FOR ALL LANDS—world-wide in their aspect—"a light of the people." Man is, confessedly, a corrupt intelligence; and, in the nature of things, a knowledge of his state is essential to his improvement. Will he ever seek a remedy or ask for a refuge until he has felt the disease or descried the peril? Whence comes this discovery? Nothing less than a special revelation of rectitude can meet the case. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Next comes the other element—"salvation." Each of these two elements of our religion is equally necessary for man everywhere. The value, however, of each depends upon mutual connection; each is useless by itself. II. THESE BLESSINGS ARE FOR ALL TIMES, AS WELL AS FOR ALL LANDS. "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke," etc. These words suggest three solemn considerations—1. That man is related to two distinct systems of things, the one involving the "heavens and the earth," the other "righteousness and salvation"—the one material, the other spiritual. This twofold relation is a peculiarity of our history. The other tenants of the globe are related to the material as we are. But with the spiritual they appear to have no connection. 2. That one of the systems to which man is related is transient, the other is permanent. 3. That the permanent system should command man's chief concern. Hear the sum of this address:—Beware of practical materialism. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Righteousness and salvation:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE SPECIALLY ADDRESSED. By comparing the first and the seventh with the fourth verse of the chapter, we find four leading features of their character set forth: 1. They are said to know righteousness. 2. To follow after righteousness. 3. To seek the Lord. 4. To have the law of God in their hearts. II. THE ADDRESS ITSELF. It constitutes a sublime prophetic description of those spiritual blessings to be ripened by the advent of the Messiah. It foretells the setting up of that kingdom which cometh not by outward observation, but which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—the publication of "that better covenant established on better promises." Many topics of deep interest are suggested by this prophetic setting forth of the blessings and triumphs of the Gospel. The text fully asserts—1. Their certainty. 2. Their perpetuity. (*T. Page, M.A.*) *An evangelical law:*—The "law" here meant (ver. 4) is that of Zion (chap. ii. 3), as distinguished from that of Sinai—the Gospel of redemption. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **My righteousness is near.**—*God's righteousness and salvation:*—The Gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world. "A law shall proceed from Me" (ver. 4), an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith (chap. ii. 3). I. THIS SHALL BRING WITH IT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION, shall open a ready way to the children of men how they may be justified and saved. It is called God's righteousness and salvation—1. Because of His contriving and bringing it about. 2. It is a righteousness that He will accept for us, and accept us for. 3. And a righteousness which He will work in us. 4. It is the salvation of the Lord, for it ariseth from Him, and terminates in Him. Observe, there is no salvation without righteousness, and wherever there is the righteousness of God, there shall be His salvation. II. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION SHALL VERY SHORTLY APPEAR. It is near, it is gone forth. It is near in time. It is near in place, not far to seek (Rom. x. 8). III. THIS EVANGELICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION SHALL NOT BE CONFINED TO THE JEWISH NATION, BUT SHALL BE EXTENDED TO THE GENTILES. (*M. Henry.*) *God's arm* shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on His arm shall others trust and be saved by it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens.—*The eternity of religion:*—From the

thought of the universality of religion the prophet rises to that of its eternity, which is here expressed by a contrast of surprising boldness between the "things which are seen" and the "things which are not seen." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The present and the future:*—I. We have to speak to you of CREATED THINGS—the heavens above and the earth beneath—as temporal either in themselves, or in regard to us who "must die in like manner." There may be much room for questioning whether there will be the actual annihilation of matter; whether even this earth is to be so destroyed that no vestige of it shall remain. We know that our bodies at least are not to be annihilated; but that having gone through certain processes, they are to be united to the soul, and remain in that re-union for ever. Without, however, supposing the actual annihilation of matter, we may speak of the universe as destined to be destroyed, seeing that the systems which are to succeed to the present will be wholly different, and wear all the traces of a new creation. Our text marks out a second way in which our connection with visible things—the heavens and the earth—may be brought to a close—"they that dwell therein shall die in like manner." II. A CONTRAST is drawn between God—His salvation and His righteousness—and the heavens and the earth. It seems the design of the passage to affix a general character to the objects of faith as distinguished from the objects of sense—the character of permanence and distinguished from that of decline. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Looking heavenward:*—Man hath a muscle more than ordinary to draw up his eyes heavenward. (*J. Trapp.*) *The perishing and the stable:*—I. THE PERISHING NATURE OF ALL WORLDLY OBJECTS, PURSUITS, AND COMFORTS. II. THE STABILITY OF THOSE WHICH THE GOSPEL PROPOSES. (*W. Richardson.*) *An eternal salvation:*—We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, but what we have in the Gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end. (*M. Henry.*) *God's everlasting salvation:*—There are brought before us in the text, three great varieties of existence, viz. those of man, the earth, and the starry heavens; and contrasted with God's salvation and righteousness. I. GOD'S SALVATION IS INDEPENDENT OF, AND WILL OUTLIVE, EVERYTHING HUMAN. "When they that dwell therein shall die in like manner," *i. e.* like the old earth itself. "My salvation shall be for ever." Not only is the power of God unto salvation independent of its friends, but unconquerable by its foes. II. THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH; AND SO, TOO, WILL THE EARTH OUT OF WHICH THEY SPRING. It "shall wax old like a garment." To the same intent speaks science. Will religion wax old too? When the aged planet's voice is low and indistinct, will the truth of God also be less clear and defined? I trow not. The world, in its youth and beauty, was but a great symbol. The symbol is gone; the truth remains. The time may come when the resources of earth may be dried up; not so the resources of Heaven. There may be no sunshine to cheer the earth; there will be sunshine for the hearts of men;—no dew to refresh a thirsty earth; there will be life-giving dew for the soul of man. III. OVER THE WHOLE EARTH BROODS THE MIGHTY LAW OF CHANGE. Everywhere there are births and dissolutions. Almost everything yields to its power. From the tiny flower, to the huge mountain; from the life of the insect that is born and dies in a day, to the life of men, of nations, of the whole world. The dominion of the changeable, however, is not confined to this world; it extends to all worlds. And why should it remain any longer when a grander universe has begun? The work of the old one is done. It came into being only to speak the great truths of God. It has done so; let it pass. Its bright suns, the centres of life and light, all spoke of one Eternal Sun from whom comes all life and all light. Let the changing, decaying systems of the old universe now disappear; their existence would be but a mockery beside the one everlasting system of righteousness. Let all that must pass away now pass. The watchword is, "For ever and ever," for ever one system, one will, one obedience, one atmosphere of love. (*D. Johnson, M.A.*) *The eternity of God's salvation:*—This is evidently one of those predictions having special reference to the introduction of the Gospel dispensation, with which this book is so thickly studded. We may regard vers. 4 and 5 as forming a kind of preface to ver. 6; and in that preface the clue is given in four ruling words, viz. law, judgment, righteousness, and salvation. 1. The Gospel is a law—not written upon tables of stone, but upon the fleshly tables of the heart by the Spirit of the living God; it is a law of faith, and love, and obedience; it is the law by which God will henceforth govern men. As the prophet in another place says, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us." His law is in order to His rule; and His rule is in order to the salvation of men. 2. The word "judgment" is here used in the sense of a body or

code of laws, such as form the basis of the constitution of a kingdom. It must point to the body of Gospel truth which God is about to reveal to the world. The doctrines, precepts, promises, which centre upon the person and work, which together are bound up in the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, these form the basis, the foundation which God will "make settled" for a light to the people. 3. "My righteousness is near." It is about to be signally manifested, and in an unheard-of way, by the death of My only begotten Son. Therein am I about to be seen, just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. 4. "My salvation is gone forth," etc. The good news that men are to be saved by the free grace of God, is already published, and it shall awaken loving trust in Me wherever it is known. Then comes the climax upon this preface; the eternal endurance which is the destiny of this saving rule of the Almighty—"Lift up your eyes to the heavens," etc. Three things here present themselves for our consideration—I. THE DESTINY OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. 1. Let us think of their nature. They are an emanation from the mind of God. 2. The design of the creation. (1) This is its immediate design—to subserve the well-being of man. (2) But what is the ultimate design of the heavens and the earth? Like all else, to declare the glory of God. But upon this two remarks must be made—This declaration is by itself alone imperfect, as all material signs of truth must be. The printed page may tell us many truths, but there are truths which the printed page of itself can never tell. Creation cannot declare to us all that we ought to know of God. There are apparent contradictions in nature: there is the genial sun, the gentle dew, the balmy wind; but there is also the fiery volcano, the awful earthquake, the furious hurricane. Creation cannot reconcile its own phenomena; its testimony is imperfect without some higher and concurrent light. The testimony of creation is too often rendered void or perverted through human sinfulness. Either men do not see God at all in nature, or they view Him with vision all awry. (3) Carry your thoughts forward to the revealed destiny of the heavens and earth. They are to pass away utterly. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, etc." II. THE DESTINY OF THE MORTAL RACE OF MAN. "They that dwell therein shall die in like manner." Man and the world date from the same origin, and are formed of the same material. 1. Let us consider the nature of the mortal race of man. It is simply a part of the visible material creation. 2. Think again of the design of our mortal race. It is pre-eminently to declare the glory of God. "I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." But this glory that excelleth God is to derive not so much from our bodily nature, for this is but the kind of glory that all His other works render to Him, an unconscious glory; as from our spiritual nature, from renovated wills, from purified affections, from a redeemed and sanctified nature. 3. We shall gain further light upon the purpose of God with regard to our earthly race, if we glance at the analogy between the individual life and that of the whole race. Each man among us is the miniature, the epitome of the history of the world. He is the microcosm; you trace in yourself imperfections of bodily and mental powers; you are conscious of the seeds of death within you; all connected with your present condition speaks plainly the lesson that you are in a dissolving, uncertain, precarious, transitory condition. It is fitly described in the emblems of Scripture, a tent, not a fixed habitation, a lodging, not a final rest. Now, I say you may trace a close analogy to all this in the history of the whole race. The world grows old; there are wrinkles on its brow. 4. Then remember that this is the predicted destiny of our mortal race. All living men and all their sensuous surroundings shall be utterly swept away. III. THE DESTINY OF GOD'S SAVING RULE.—"My salvation," etc. By the saving rule of God we mean that rule which God has revealed in the Gospel, in conforming to which man enjoy salvation; the rule which demands repentance, implicit faith in the Mediator and obedience to the Holy Ghost. It is God's plan, or rule, or way of salvation, and it is founded upon the immutable attribute of His righteousness. 1. Look at its nature. The Gospel is the full and perfect exhibition of the mind of God. 2. Look at its design. It is in order to the complete blessedness of our immortal spirits in earth and heaven—here and hereafter, and for ever and ever. 3. God's saving rule shall endure for ever and ever. Conclusion: The rule of God must either save and bless, and eternally exalt you, or it must crush and destroy you. (*E. Johnson, B.A.*) *The contrast:*—I. A CHANGING, PASSING WORLD. "Lift up your eyes," etc. God calls on us to interrupt for a short season our busy occupations, and to meditate on things seen and unseen, things temporal and things eternal. 1. The framework of creation is changing,—passing. 2. The riches, the comforts, the enjoyments of life are

passing. 3. The cares, and anxieties, and sorrows of life are passing. 4. Life itself is passing. II. AN UNCHANGING, ETERNAL SALVATION. 1. The blessing itself is salvation. 2. It has God for its author. 3. Eternity is its duration. 4. Sinners are the partakers of this blessing. Which has your heart—your hopes? The love of both cannot dwell in the same breast, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (*F. Storr, M.A.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness.**—*Christians encouraged against the fear of man:*—I. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. 1. Those who "know righteousness." 2. They have the law of God in their heart. II. THE ADDRESS MADE TO THEM. "Hearken unto Me," etc. 1. Let us remember who is the speaker of these words. 2. The address may be considered as containing an encouraging exhortation enforced by powerful arguments. 3. Consider by what powerful arguments this exhortation is enforced: They who now revile the people of God will quickly be brought to an end. If their malice be not extinguished, yet the means of gratifying it will be no more. They are mortals, and as such they must soon die. 4. On the other hand, "My righteousness (saith the Lord) shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation." In vain do ungodly men speak evil of His cause. It shall survive all their attacks; and shall increase, when they who reviled, or opposed it, shall be silent in darkness. In vain are His people reproached. They cannot be really injured by such attempts. (*E. Cooper.*) *Man's mortality:*—The matter is not great which they say of us who must be worm's meat shortly. (*M. Henry.*) *Futility of human opposition to the Gospel:*—Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to its progress. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord.**—*The awaking of Zion* (with chap. lii. 1 (*a*)):—Both these verses are, I think, to be regarded as spoken by one voice, that of the Servant of the Lord. In the one, as Priest and Intercessor, He lifts the prayers of earth to heaven in His own holy hands—and in the other, as Messenger and Word of God, He brings the answer and command of heaven to earth on His own authoritative lips—thus setting forth the deep mystery of His person and double office as mediator between man and God. But even if we set aside that thought the correspondence and relation of the two passages remain the same. In any case they are intentionally parallel in form and connected in substance. The latter is the answer to the former. The cry of Zion is responded to by the call of God. The awaking of the arm of the Lord is followed by the awaking of the Church. He puts on strength in clothing us with His might, which becomes ours. I. We have here a common principle underlying both the clauses, namely, THE OCCURRENCE IN THE CHURCH'S HISTORY OF SUCCESSIVE PERIODS OF ENERGY AND OF LANGUOR. It is freely admitted that such alternation is not the highest ideal of growth, either in the individual or in the community. Our Lord's own parables set forth a more excellent way—the way of uninterrupted increase. So might our growth be, if the mysterious life in the seed met no checks. But, as a matter of fact, the Church has not thus grown. Rather, at the best, its emblem is to be looked for, not in corn but in the forest tree—the very rings in whose trunk tell of recurring seasons when the sap has risen at the call of spring, and sunk again before the frowns of winter. In our own hearts we have known such times. And we have seen a like palsy smite whole regions and ages of the Church of God. Where is the joyful buoyancy and expansive power with which the Gospel burst into the world? If, then, there be such recurring seasons of languor, they must either go on deepening till sleep becomes death, or they must be broken by a new outburst of vigorous life. And it is by such times that the Kingdom of Christ always has grown. Its history has been one of successive impulses gradually exhausted, as by friction and gravity, and mercifully repeated just at the moment when it was ceasing to advance and had begun to slide downwards. II. THE TWOFOLD EXPLANATION OF THESE VARIATIONS. That bold metaphor of God sleeping and waking is often found in Scripture, and generally expresses the contrast between the long years of patient forbearance, during which evil things and evil men go on their rebellious road unchecked but by Love, and the dread moment when some throne of iniquity is smitten to the dust. Such is the original application of the expression here. But the contrast may fairly be widened beyond that specific form of it, and taken to express any apparent variations in the forth-putting of His power. We may, then, see here implied the cause of these alternations on its Divine side, and then, in the corresponding verse addressed to the Church, the cause on the human

side. 1. As to the former. We have to distinguish between the power, and what Paul calls "the might of the power." The one is final, constant, unchangeable. It does not necessarily follow that the other is. The rate of operation, so to speak, and the amount of energy actually brought into play may vary, though the force remains the same. 2. Our second text tells us that if God's arm seems to slumber, and really does so, it is because Zion sleeps. He works through us; and we have the solemn and awful power of checking the might which would flow through us. III. THE BEGINNING OF ALL AWAKING IS THE CHURCH'S EARNEST CRY TO GOD. It is with us as with infants, the first sign of whose awaking is a cry. For every such stirring of quickened religious life must needs have in it bitter penitence and pain at the discovery flashed upon us of the wretched deadness of our past. Nor is Zion's cry to God only the beginning and sign of all true awaking; it is also the condition and indispensable precursor of all perfecting of recovery from spiritual languor. Look at the passionate earnestness of it—and see to it that our drowsy prayers be like it. Look at the grand confidence with which it founds itself on the past, recounting the mighty deeds of ancient days, and looking back, not for despair, but for joyful confidence on the generations of old; and let our faint-hearted faith be quickened by the example, to expect great things of God. IV. THE ANSWERING CALL FROM GOD TO ZION. Our truest prayers are but the echo of God's promises. God's best answers are the echo of our prayers. As in two mirrors set opposite to each other, the same image is repeated over and over again, the reflection of a reflection, so here, within the prayer, gleams an earlier promise, within the answer is mirrored the prayer. And in that reverberation, and giving back to us of our petition transformed into a command, we are not to see a dismissal of it as if we had misapprehended our true want. The very opposite interpretation is the true one. The prayer of Zion is heard and answered. God awakes, and clothes Himself with might. Then, as some warrior king, himself roused from sleep and girded with flashing steel, bids the clarion sound through the grey twilight to summon the prostrate ranks that lie round his tent, so the sign of God's awaking and the first act of His conquering might is this trumpet call—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand"—"put off the works of darkness," the night gear that was fit for slumber—"and put on the armour of light," the mail of purity that gleams and glitters even in the dim dawn. Nor is it to be forgotten that this, like all God's commands, carries in its heart a promise. But the main point which I would insist on is the practical discipline which this Divine summons requires from us. 1. The chief means of quickened life and strength is deepened communion with Christ. 2. This summons calls us to the faithful use of the power which, on condition of that communion, we have. So, let us confidently look for times of blessing, penitently acknowledge that our own faithlessness has hindered the arm of the Lord, earnestly beseech Him to come in His rejoicing strength, and, drawing ever fresh power from constant communion with our dear Lord, use it to its last drop for Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Church's cry and the Divine answer* (with chap. lii. 1):—THE CHURCH'S CALL ON GOD. "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord." 1. The figure used here is simple enough. The "arm" is a natural symbol of power, for it is through it that we execute our purpose. If it is benumbed, insensitive, and motionless, we say that it is asleep; but when it is stretched out for action it is awake. And what the prophet pleads for is that some display of Divine power might be granted, such as had once been seen in Egypt, when "Rahab" (the fierce and boastful power of heathenism) had been broken in pieces, and "the dragon" (or rather the crocodile, the recognized symbol of Egypt) had been sorely wounded. Now, the uses to which we put our arm may, any of them, suggest the actions to which we would summon our God in earnest prayer. The arm of the warrior bears the shield which protects his own body and those of weak and wounded friends lying at his feet; and we want such overshadowing protection against the fiery darts of the wicked. The arm is naturally outstretched to point the way to one who is ignorant and bewildered, and when we are perplexed as to doctrine or duty, we find it is not a vain thing to pray: "Teach me Thy way, O Lord." What is needed now, as of old, is the realization and the manifestation of the presence of God in the Person of Christ, His Son; so that now there may come about a true revival of religion, a living, unshakable belief that God is amongst His people of a truth. If only He reveals Himself in and through His Church, sin will be conquered and the world redeemed. 2. The necessity for this prayer arises from the fact that the work which lies before us as Christian Churches cannot be done by human power. II. GOD'S CALL UPON THE CHURCH. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion," etc. God never does for

His people what they can do for themselves. 1. The Church is called upon to arouse from slumber—and whether it is the result of despondency, or of indolence, sleep must be shaken off. 2. The Church is also to endue herself with strength, to resume courage, and renew effort with a fresh sense of her responsibility. 3. But let us be thankful that there is room in God's heart for quieter service. They who fail to put on strength, can at least put on the "beautiful garments" of holiness; and although these should endue the most active worker, they can transform into a saintly witness the solitary sufferer. 4. The Church is summoned here to consecrate herself anew to God. She is represented as a female captive in degrading servitude, whose hour of deliverance has come, and who is to shake herself free from the bands which have held her, and rejoice in new found liberty. It is not only sin which holds the Church in bondage, but sometimes formalism and ceremonialism, and we must beware, lest, with our love for order, we become thereby crippled and hindered. Let us be ready to make any change of mode or organization, to cast off any prejudices, if they prevent successful whole-hearted service for our God, and let us regard this as a time for renewed consecration to Him, to whom we owe ourselves, our time, our all. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *The arm of the Lord invoked*:—I. EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS TO WHICH THE INVOCATION IS ADDRESSED. "O arm of the Lord." II. THE OBJECTS WHICH THIS INVOCATION INVOLVES. "Awake, awake," etc. It is an earnest application on the part of the prophet, that God would come forth as He had done in former periods. We may refer to a number of great events, of which the people of old could scarcely form an idea. We remember what God did in the fulness of time when He sent His Son into the world to restore mankind. We remember what He did on the hill of Calvary. We remember what He did when He "raised Him up from the dead, and set Him on His own right hand, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church." We remember what He did on the Pentecostal day, when He sent down His Holy Spirit. After allusion has thus been made to the former displays of the Divine power, there is an evident contrast as to what was the state of things in the prophet's day. There seemed to be a suspension of this energy; the heritage of God was wasted, His truth was insulted, His worship was slighted, His requirements were contemned. And what is it we want? We want His power to accompany the preaching of the Word. It must be remembered that there is no manifestation of the Divine power so glorious as that which is seen in the extension of the Gospel, and its power on the souls of men. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS WE HAVE TO BELIEVE THE INVOCATION SHALL BE FULFILLED. 1. Consider the care of God over the Church in past ages of the world. 2. From the character of God as the hearer and answerer of prayer. 3. From the nature of the promises recorded in the sacred pages. (*J. Parsons.*) *Prayer for national prosperity, and for the revival of religion, inseparably connected*:—I. THE IMPORT OF THIS PRAYER. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!" In general such a petition as this suggests to us that our prayers for Divine interposition and deliverance from public calamities should be supremely directed to the glory of God. A just regard to the glory of God in our prayers implies the two following things: 1. That we expect deliverance from God alone, desire that it may be attended with such circumstances as His hand and power may be seen in it, and are willing to acknowledge Him as the supreme and only Author of it. 2. We ought also to pray for a dispensation of His grace and mercy that a revival of religion may accompany temporal relief. (1) We have no warrant to ask the last of these without the first. (2) We have no reason to expect that it will be separately bestowed. (3) If it should, in any degree, it would not be a blessing but a curse. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER. "Awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old," etc. The prophet animates his faith, and encourages his own dependence, and that of others, upon the promises of God, by celebrating the greatness of His power, as manifested in former memorable deliverances granted to His chosen people. Consider the effect of such a view upon the mind, and its influence in prayer. 1. It satisfies us of the power of God, and His ability to save. 2. The same view serves to ascertain us of the mercy of God, and His readiness to help us in distress. III. APPLY THE TRUTHS on this subject to our own present situation as to public affairs. Let us remember that we serve an unchangeable God. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Christ the arm of God*:—Christ is here called the arm of the Lord. The arm of the Lord means God in action. The grand purposes of redemption, conceived in eternity, were dead thought, if lawful so to speak, in the mind of God, until they were revealed in Christ, the executor of the thoughts of the Godhead. Christ was ever called the Logos, the expression of

Divinity. When the hand is spoken of in the Bible, it means the exact working of God in nature, providence and grace. The arm is that which sends the hand into action. "The outstretched arm" is the far-reaching power of God. By the right hand or arm of God we are to understand a more special and dazzling display of God's power. In all instances the hand or arm of God means Christ. The prophet appeals to the past, "Awake, as in the ancient days," etc. In the context he looks to the future and catches glimpses of the glory of the Advent, and he cries, It is the arm of God! The text is an invocation for Christ to come in the Advent. This arm of God is the revelation—I. OF GOD'S GLORY. II. OF HIS SAVING POWER. It is an arm that can reach everywhere. There is no height so high or depth so deep as to be beyond its reach to save. III. A UNIVERSAL REVELATION OF GOD. It means the revealing of God in creation, in providence, in redemption, in the family, in the closet, in the soul, in death, at the judgment, in eternity, where it will secure the eternal triumph of those whose faith will then merge into sight. Conclusion: 1. What are your relations to this arm of God? Has it been to you only an object of wonder as the bow in the clouds, or has it been an arm bared to the shoulder, entwined about you, filled with a vitality which it imparted to you as it defended and lifted you? 2. Have you thought what this arm hath wrought for you? How it suffered itself to be shorn of its strength that you might be strong? 3. Have you not thought of the final triumph of that arm? (*N. Schenck, D.D.*) *Thy strength! my strength* (with chap. lii. 1):—1. Everything seemed to have gone against the exile. Life had no longer for him a programme, but only a retrospect; no longer a radiant hope, but only a fading reminiscence; no longer an alluring vision, but only a distinguished history. Here he lay in captivity; the songs of Zion had fled from his lips, and his mouth was filled with wailing and complaint. "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." "Where is He that brought us up out of the sea with the Shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within us?" And now and again the exile half-turned himself in angry, hopeless cry, "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down!" And again he relapsed into the low and cheerless moan: "My Lord hath forgotten me." And yet again he pierced the heaven with his searching supplication: "Awake, awake, put on Thy strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old." 2. What will be the Lord's reply to the cry of the exile? Here it is: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion!" The Divine response is a sharp retort. "It is not thy God who sleepeth! It is thou thyself who art wrapt about in a sluggish and consuming indolence! Thou art crying out for more strength; but what of the strength thou hast? Thy trumpet is silent, and thine armour is rusting upon the walls! Thou art like a vagrant asking for help, when thou hast a full purse hidden between the covers of an idle bed! Thou art pleading for reinforcements, and thy soldiers are on the couch! Thy prayer is the supplication of a man who is not doing his best! Clothe thyself in thy present powers, consecrate thine all to the purpose of thy prayer, and stand forth in battle array." I need not say that there is nothing in the Lord's response which disparages the ministry of prayer. It does, however, tend to put prayer in its right place, and to give a true apprehension of its purpose and ministry. Prayer is not a talisman, to be used as an easy substitute for our activity and vigilance. Prayer is a ministry in which our own powers can be quickened into more vigorous and healthy service. God has given us certain endowments. Certain talents are part of our original equipment. We are possessed of powers of judgment, of initiative, of sympathy; and the primary implication of all successful prayer is that these powers are willingly placed upon the altar of sacrifice. Any prayer is idle when these powers are indolent. We too frequently pray to be carried like logs, and it is the Lord's will that we should contend like men! The principle is this—our "strength" must back our supplications. Is the backing always present? (1) Take the matter of our personal salvation. Every one is conscious how immature he is in the Divine life. We know how dim is our spiritual discernment. We know how few and infrequent are our brilliant conquests, and how many and common are our shameful defeats. And again and again we supplicate the Almighty: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!" Is it possible that the response of the Lord may be the retort of the olden days: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion"? We are so prone to divide the old psalmist's counsel, and to pay heed to one part and to ignore the other. "Bring unto the Lord glory!" And so we do! We bring our glorias, our doxologies, our hymns, and our anthems, and we do well, but it is a maimed and lifeless offering if, with the glory, we do not bring our

strength. "Bring unto the Lord glory and strength!" It is in this lacking of strength in our personal religion that we are so woefully deficient. We need to bring to our religion more strength of common-sense—more inventiveness, more fertility of ideas, more purpose, more steady and methodical persistence. And we need to bring a more commanding strength of will. So many of us would like to be saints without becoming soldiers, and the desire can never be attained. Let me tell you a story. Two little girls in the same class, one at the top and the other at the bottom. The one at the bottom consults the one at the top. "How is it that you are always at the top of the class?" "Oh, I ask Jesus to help me!" "Then I will do the same," said the undistinguished member, and she forthwith put the counsel into practice. Next day their relative positions were unaltered, one at the top, and the other at the bottom. The consultation is renewed. "I thought you said that Jesus would help me, and here I am at the bottom again!" "Well, so He will, but how long did you work?" "Oh, I never opened a book!" (2) Take the matter of the salvation of the home. We have interceded for our little ones at the throne of grace. Are we putting our "strength" into the salvation of the home? I do not know a better pattern of a home than Charles Kingsley's, but he brought his strength to its creation. It was a home whose moral atmosphere was like the air on Alpine heights, a home in which, in all perplexities, the only referendum was the Lord Himself, a home all of whose ministries were clothed in grace and beauty. I shall never forget hearing a long conversation between two men, one of whom had inquired of the other the size of his family. "I have ten," he said. "What a responsibility!" replied the other. To which there came at once the glad response: "And what a privilege, for they are all workers on the side of God." (3) There is the matter of social redemption. How often have we prayed for the city: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!" And still, I think, there comes the Divine retort, "Put on thy strength, O Zion!" We abuse the privilege of prayer when we make it a minister of personal evasion and neglect. That is my message. There is no true prayer without a full consecration. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Ver. 11. **Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return.**—*Great deliverances:*—The return of the light of morning after the darkness of the night; of a fine summer after a cold and cheerless winter; of health and strength after a season of sickness and pain, is refreshing and delightful, and demands the gratitude of the heart. The deliverance of a nation from temporal slavery or subjection has often kindled a fire in the breast of the patriot, the painter, the poet and the historian; but what are all earthly blessings when compared with those which are spiritual and eternal? (*New Irish Pulpit.*) *The present and future joy of the redeemed of the Lord:*—There is the greatest harmony throughout the whole Bible, and its glowing descriptions of future events have always some relation to the spiritualizing effects of the Gospel of Christ. 1. Who can with such propriety be called the redeemed of the Lord, as they whom He has delivered from the power as well as penalty of sin? 2. Who, again, can with such propriety be called the redeemed of the Lord, as they whom He ransoms from that all-conquering foe, who puts all things under his feet? 3. But must the soul lie insensible with the body until this general redemption? Must ages pass before the redeemed of the Lord enjoy a foretaste of their redemption? No! "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." 4. But are there not some considerations to be taken by us into account on this subject? Is there not some blessing—a blessing beyond all other blessings, which makes these a matter of everlasting joy to the redeemed of the Lord? In bringing many sons to glory Jesus has been made perfect through sufferings; He has made reconciliation for sin. (*W. M. Harte.*) *The joy of the ransomed:*—No New Testament utterance could be more beautiful than this picturing of the return of the redeemed of the Lord to Zion. 1. It points, at the outset, to the grounds of their confidence and joy. They are ransomed travellers: they have found the "righteousness" and the "salvation" spoken of at the commencement of the chapter. They go on their pilgrim way exulting in Him whose arm "hath wounded the dragon"—the "Man of God's right hand," who in His cross and passion hath "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." They are more than conquerors through Him that loved them. 2. They are further here truthfully represented, even in the course of their journey through the wilderness, as filled "with peace and joy in believing," "abounding in hope." The Christian is a joyful man. Though it be a wilderness he treads, and though sorrow and mourning are also depicted as tracking

his footsteps, yet he has elements of tranquil happiness within him which make the song, not the tear, the appropriate exponent of his thoughts and emotions. It were strange, indeed, were it otherwise. At peace with God; sin forgiven; the heart changed; the affections elevated; grace moulding, sustaining, quickening, sanctifying; and, rising above all, the assured hope of glory hereafter. 3. The words, too, seem to tell of an ever-augmenting joy. As the portals of glory draw nearer, the song deepens in melody and strength. They come to Zion "with singing;" then "everlasting joy is on their head." Then, they obtain a new anointing of "gladness;" and finally "sorrow and mourning"—these two companions of the wilderness—rise on their sombre, gloomy wings, and speed away for ever! (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Journey and song:*—I. A REDEEMED PEOPLE. II. THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD AS TRAVELLERS. III. THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD AS SINGERS. (*J. M. Blackie, LL.B.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **I, even I, am He that comforteth you.**—*Divine comfort is strength:*—They prayed for the operations of His power (ver. 9); He answers them with the consolations of His grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. (*M. Henry.*) *Our true Comforter:*—I. THE LORD COMFORTS ALL WHO TRUST HIM, BY REVEALING HIS RELATIONSHIP. It is a delight to know that if the Almighty be a king, He is seated on a throne of grace, to which every man is at liberty to come; but it is a much more comforting consolation to know that the Lord does not wish to be known to us as our king; it is His desire for us to approach Him as our Father. If you gather the record of all the good and lovable fathers who have ever existed, and can imagine them welded into one being, you will have some idea of our Heavenly Father. II. THE LORD COMFORTS US, BY HIS CONTINUAL PRESENCE. Have you thought what it means, in prayer, when you close your eyes? III. THE LORD COMFORTS US, BY PROVING HIS EXTRAORDINARY LOVE. Perhaps you may have sinned grievously, and, though you have repented, and are struggling bravely, the unfeeling world may point its finger of scorn; but do not despair. Listen to the voice of your Heavenly Father, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you!" IV. THE LORD COMFORTS US, BY SHOWING THAT HE GOVERNS ALL THINGS. Fear hath torment, and it is the parent of all our cares and anxieties. (*W. Birch.*) **Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man?**—*The comparative fear of God and man:*—I. There are TWO PARTIES here spoken of—"man that shall die," "the son of man that shall be made as grass;" and "the Lord our Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth." It appears to be a main object of the Scriptures, elsewhere as in the text, to set in the most vivid contrast with each other the meanness, the emptiness, the nothingness of man; and the all-sufficiency, the majesty, and the glory of God. II. In the common intercourse of the world, THE FORMER OF THESE PARTIES, RATHER THAN THE LATTER, IS PRACTICALLY THE OBJECT OF REVERENCE, RESPECT AND FEAR. Indeed, the whole system of society seems founded on the principle that human sanctions are above Divine. III. THE MEANING OF THAT EMPHATIC QUESTION WITH WHICH THESE WORDS COMMENCE, "WHO ART THOU?" 1. The inquiry seems to have been primarily addressed to those whose prevailing fear of man was the result rather of weakness under trying circumstances, than of carnal blindness and depravity of heart. It seems intended for the encouragement of God's people when threatened with dangers, and particularly when harassed by the terrors which cruel enemies inspire. 2. But in another sense, and with far different emphasis, does it apply to those who, in the genuine spirit of the world, and with the full agreement of the will, pay that homage to man which they deliberately refuse to God. Well may it be said to such, in a tone of mingled indignation and surprise, "Who art thou?" (*H. Woodward, M.A.*) *Fear of man removed by reflecting upon God:*—If, being children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, we duly reflected on our "high calling," and wisely valued our privileges, we should certainly neither stand so much in awe of one another, nor be so guilty as we are of forgetfulness of the Almighty. I. "WHO ART THOU?" The question was put to Israel, with reference, not to what they were in themselves—in dependence upon their own strength or holiness; for they were weak and miserable offenders, suffering the punishment of their offences; conquered, and carried into exile by heathen enemies; friendless and hopeless: but it referred to Jehovah's choice of them as a peculiar people, to their experience of the Divine protection, and their covenanted right in the Divine promises. And, without reference to God, and His salvation, what can be the answer of any human being to the question, "Who, or what art thou?"—nothing,

and less than nothing; a vapour, that is exhaled and is not; an atom, that perishes and is forgotten; a sinful and miserable being, the child of perdition, "at his best estate altogether vanity." It is not so, however, that God sees us. He beholds all things here below in His blessed Son. Redemption enables every believer to return a lofty answer to the inquiry, "Who art thou?" II. If such be a correct draught of the reply which the faithful Christian can make to the question, "Who art thou?" THE UNFITNESS, THE IMPROPRIETY OF HIS YIELDING TO THE FEAR OF MAN IS MANIFEST. 1. It saps the vital strength of the Christian character, in undermining our faith. I cannot truly believe in God, as He has revealed Himself, and yet stoop to this fear. 2. It leads men to vain and unworthy expedients—to trust in the "arm of flesh" and in "refuges of lies." 3. Carnal fear is the very worst form of that unreasonable care and anxiety, against the encroachments of which our Lord cautions us. 4. "But," asks the prophet, "who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid?" Art not thou—thou, the child of God—of so high a dignity, of a strain and lineage so glorious, that thou oughtest not to be suspected of so degrading a passion as ignoble fear? III. ALWAYS CONNECTED WITH FEAR OF MAN, IS FORGETFULNESS OF ALMIGHTY GOD. (*R. Cattermole, B.D.*) *God more to be feared than man:*—That of two evils the greatest is most to be feared, is a self-evident principle, which, as soon as it is proposed, commands our assent; that he who can inflict a greater evil is more to be dreaded than he who can inflict only a less, is an immediate consequence of that self-evident principle; that "the Lord our Maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth," is armed with greater power, and can inflict greater and more durable evils than "man who shall die, and the son of man who shall be made as grass," is more forcibly expressed than if it were in direct terms declared in the expostulation of the text: that man therefore is not to be feared, and that God is; or that man is not to be feared in comparison with God; not equally to be feared with Him; not at all to be feared, when the fear of man would betray us to do things inconsistent with the fear of God, and such as would argue us to have forgotten "the Lord our Maker," is a truth as clearly, plainly and fully demonstrable as any proposition in mathematics. I. It is certain matter of fact, that IN THE CONDUCT OF OUR LIVES WE ARE MORE AWED BY THE FEAR OF MAN THAN WE ARE BY THE FEAR OF GOD. This is proved from experience and observation. As evident as it is, that men commit those sins in secret which they dare not commit openly; that they take more care to appear religious than really to be religious; that in a licentious age they are afraid to own themselves to be under the influences of religion; that they commit greater sins to hide less; that they choose rather obstinately to persist in an error, than to own they were in the wrong; that they choose rather to break the laws of God than to be out of fashion; that they are time-servers, and play fast and loose with their principles, in order to secure or to promote their interest; that they "make shipwreck of their faith" when storms arise, and fall away in times of persecution; so evident is it, that in the conduct of their lives they are more swayed by the fear of men than they are by the fear of God. II. INQUIRE HOW THIS COMES TO PASS. 1. As to the case of habitual, profligate, daring sinners, their conduct in this matter is easily accounted for. By a constant, uninterrupted course of sinning they have worn out all sense of religion, all notions of God, all apprehensions of a future state, and a judgment to come. 2. Every disciple of Christ is not so great a proficient in the doctrine of the Cross, as to reach up to that fulness of stature in Christ to which St. Paul was arrived, when he could, without arrogance, declare his undaunted courage and resolution of mind in that magnanimous, but sincere, profession, which we find him making, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" etc. 3. If persecution is proved to be so strong a temptation, and the faith of the generality of Christians is so weak, it is no great matter of surprise, that men should often yield to the violence of such pressing trials, and should be overawed into sinful compliances, by the fear of those evils, which, though they bear no proportion to the wrath of God, that shall be revealed in the last day, are yet strong enough to betray the succours which reason and religion offer. 4. But still what account can be given why men venture the loss of their immortal souls, to avoid evils of a much less magnitude; such as are shame, disrepute, the displeasure of superiors, the dislike of equals, or even sometimes the disapprobation of inferiors? The best account I am able to give of such extravagant and unjustifiable conduct is this: the sins to which men are drawn by such slight temptations are not usually of that heinous kind, as those are to which they are tempted by the terrors of greater evils; as the temptation is much weaker, so the sins to which they are tempted are

much lighter: though therefore they cannot plead the violence of the temptation, yet they are apt to hope, that the sins into which they are so easily betrayed, being not of the deepest die, will the sooner be blotted out. III. SHOW THE EXTREME FOLLY AND UNREASONABLENESS OF IT. By the order of nature our passions ought to be under the government of reason; by the laws of God they ought to be subject to the rules of religion. Our reason tells us, that the greatest evils are most to be feared; our religion teaches us, that the evils to come are exceedingly greater than any we can feel at present: both reason, therefore, and religion agree to condemn the avoiding lesser evils, by running into greater, which we always do, when out of fear to offend men we presume to sin against God. IV. GIVE SOME RULES HOW WE MAY CONQUER THIS VICIOUS AND IMMODERATE FEAR OF MAN. 1. We fear men more than God, because the evils threatened by men are apprehended to be nearer than those threatened by God. To weaken the force of this motive to the fear of men, we should consider that this apprehension of ours may be false; for though the sentence of God against evil works is not always executed speedily, yet the judgments of God do sometimes seize upon the sinner, even in the very act of sinning. But allowing them to be as yet far removed, and to advance with the slowest pace, yet the disproportion which they bear to the sorest evils men can inflict, is so great, that if we view them together, the "treasures of wrath which are laid up against the day of wrath" cannot appear light and inconsiderable, notwithstanding their present distance. But to take away all danger of our being imposed upon by viewing them as far remote, we ought in our thoughts to bring them nearer to us. 2. It will be further expedient for us to strengthen our good resolutions by considering those supports which we may expect from God, if we bravely bear up against those trials by which our virtue is, at any time, assaulted. The same power of God which will be manifested in our punishment, if we give way to the vicious fear of men, will exert itself in our assistance, that we may effectually overcome it. Having, therefore, these threats and promises of the Lord, let us act like men who are endued with reason, and like Christians who are strong in faith. (*Bp. Smalridge.*) *Foolish and impious fears:*—I. THE ABSURDITY OF THOSE FEARS. It is a disparagement to us to give way to them. In the original the pronoun is feminine, "Who art thou, O woman;" unworthy the name of a man, such a weak and womanish thing is it to give way to perplexing fears. It is absurd—1. To be in such a dread of a dying man. 2. To fear "continually every day" (ver. 13); to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy, nor have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always in a toss, to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our lifetime subject to bondage, and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened (Deut. xxviii. 66, 67). 3. To fear beyond what there is cause for. Thou art afraid of "the fury of the oppressor." It is true there is an oppressor, and he is furious. He designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee mischief, and it will be thy wisdom, therefore, to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him "as if he were ready to destroy," as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and there were no possibility of preventing it. A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of everything, and sometimes God is pleased presently to show us the folly of it. "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware. His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. II. THE IMPIETY OF THOSE FEARS. Thou "forgettest the Lord, thy Maker," etc. Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 13. **And forgettest the Lord thy Maker.**—*God the Creator:*—What is it to create the heavens and the earth? Who has seen the process of creation? I see a man shape a piece of iron or of wood into a useful instrument, and the process seems simple enough. But here I see the hand that works and the material on which it works. But that is not creation—creation out of nothing. I see no hand shaping the trees and hills; I never see something rising out of nothing. I can watch the growth of a flower, as I can the building of a house. And I know that in the former case, as in the latter, there is some force in activity. But force is not God. Behind that force God is still hidden, and the mysterious question remains, Who is He? More mysterious still when I have to reflect that millions of flowers all the world over are being formed, and that a similar force is in operation through all the worlds of boundless space. And everywhere behind this force God is. God is my Maker too. I eat and drink, I live and grow, and feel the energy of life. And that,

too, is God. So near to me—so immeasurably distant; and yet nowhere visible. How, then, shall I think of Him, and answer to my heart the question, Who is God? (*S. Edger, B.A.*)

Ver. 16. **And I have put My words in thy mouth.**—*The seed-corn of a new world:*—The words in their mouth are the seed-corn of a new world in the midst of the old. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Commissioned, endowed, preserved:*—Like the first creation, the new is a gradual process, advancing from age to age. I. IN THIS WORK GOD EMPLOYS HIS SERVANTS. When it is said, "That I may plant," etc., it is obvious that it is through Israel the work is to be done (1 Cor. iii. 9). II. FOR THIS WORK GOD ARMS HIS SERVANTS. "I have put My words in thy mouth." III. FOR THIS WORK AND IN IT GOD PRESERVES HIS SERVANTS. "I have covered thee," etc. (*W. Guthrie, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. **Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem.**—*Brighter times for exiled Israel:*—Jerusalem is pictured as a woman, prostrate through misfortune, lying helplessly as though drunken, on the roadside, her sons unable to guide or assist her: but she is to stand up; the past is now solemnly reversed; and the cup of "reeling" which she has drunk is to be given to them that afflicted her (vers. 17–23). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *A call to abandon despair:*—It is a call to awake, not so much out of the sleep of sin (though that also is necessary, in order to their being ready for deliverance), as out of the stupor of despair. (*M. Henry.*) **The cup of trembling.**—*The cup of trembling:*—Such a cup is sooner or later placed in all our hands. Some may ask us, indeed, if Christianity is not a religion of joy? Yes! But it is not a religion of hilarity. The Christian life is the reproduction of the Master's image in the world! And as He was the Man of Sorrows, so beneath all there will be tribulation in our hearts, even when we share the legacy of the Master's joy! The cup must be taken. The red wine is poured out by the good hand, and the child with bowed knee and bruised heart says, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." Good in the sight which sees the end from the beginning, which culminates in the ultimate issues of glory and reward. I. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESENT LIFE CREATES A SPIRIT OF TREMBLING. We are in a world of instability and uncertainty. Tremendous possibilities are involved in our daily lives. Health is so soon undermined. Disaster so suddenly comes. This life needs indeed a Brother and a Saviour. There must be with the Christian an element of sobriety in all human joys. II. THE ALL-SURROUNDING PRESENCE OF TEMPTATION CREATES A SPIRIT OF TREMBLING. Vain self-confidence is contemptible. III. THE LAW OF DEPENDENCE ON OTHERS CREATES A SPIRIT OF TREMBLING. 1. Illness comes, and we are dependent on the wisdom of the physician and the watchfulness of the nurse; great risk comes, and we are dependent on the command of the captain and the sobriety of the crew; or we need the safety of the wisest jurisprudence, and we are dependent on the carefulness of the lawyer and the skill of the counsel. 2. Or we have to take care of others. Wives and children who may presently be alone in the world—alone where there is such eager competition and self-concern, such neglect of the weakest and the neediest; and we must leave our simple savings to directors or to others who may mismanage our affairs, or to trustees who may be false to their trust. And who shall say that this is not to many anxious parents a "cup of trembling"? 3. Then we are citizens—men who have vast interest in all that appertains to the life and honour of the fatherland; and all these, representatively, we have to leave in the hands of men, who may through pride or ambition risk the nation's highest weal. 4. Then we are living souls, dependent on the great law of moral influence around us to a much greater extent than we think. And we cannot altogether escape from the contagion of the fashion of this present world. IV. THE NEAR APPROACH OF THE GREAT ACCOUNT CREATES A SPIRIT OF TREMBLING. Have you ever thought how nearness affects you? Disease in a near city—in your city—in your street—next door to your house! Have you ever thought how even the judgment of earth, as it comes nearer and nearer, affects the indifference of the criminal? But I am supposing that we are Christians. We have an account to render of life's stewardship. Into each of our hands God has placed the cup of personality, responsibility and accountability; and now, after a long time, "the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." This is no mere figure of speech. V. THE SEASON OF SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL CREATES A SPIRIT OF TREMBLING. We can in no sense ever feel this as Christ our Lord and Master did. But though in this He stands alone, His whole earthly history was a

spectacle of submission. Every man must bear his own burden, must drink his own cup. But Christ's comfort is ours! With trembling heart we seek the quiet pavilion of our Father. Better anything than a God-emptied life. Christ our Brother and Saviour alone can succour us in hours of submission. (*W. M. Statham.*)

Ver. 22. **Thus saith thy Lord.**—*God our Advocate:*—How can God be both judge and advocate? Maybe Isaiah would have said, "I see it not clearly myself yet." But the riddle is all explained when you bear in mind the distinction of the persons in the Godhead. He pleads His people's cause for them by the Son, and in them by the Holy Ghost. This wonderful title, "God that pleadeth the cause of His people," has been already vindicated in the history of Israel. But what is it God pleads? We may go very much astray unless we emphasize that word "cause." It is not, He pleadeth the whims of His people. Everything that I may wish or like God is not going to provide. That word "cause" means the strife, the battle, the controversy. The Church of God is just the expression of a great conflict that has been going on for ages. I want to show you how Jesus has pleaded the cause of His people, and He has done it in different courts. I. He pleaded the cause of His people first in the COURT OF JUDGMENT that was situated at Golgotha. As to proving men innocent, that is impossible; they are guilty and condemned and yet Christ steps forward and says, "I will plead their cause." And He stood in my place and yours, and pleaded our cause: but pleading our cause took Him to the Cross and into the tomb. II. Having pleaded my cause in the court of judgment, He now pleads my cause IN THE COURT OF LAW AND JUSTICE. It is not enough for a soul to be free from sin; that is the negative side. How can any man enter heaven apart from righteousness? I will suppose for a moment that this difficulty is raised in court. Yes, the past sin is atoned for; but where is the man's righteousness? I say, "Oh, my Lord, Thou who didst plead for me just now, plead again!" and I hear Him say, "I lived the life of perfect righteousness, I obeyed the law in every jot and tittle, I had Thy word hidden in My heart." And the answer comes, "The plea is perfect: sinner, thou art not only forgiven, thou art justified; thy God hath pleaded thy cause." III. Jesus now pleads my cause IN HEAVEN ITSELF. If I am a saint, I am sure to pray, but being an earthly saint I am sure to pray very badly; being a believer, I am sure to sing, but having an earthly nature I am sure there are many low grovelling notes. How are my prayers to enter heaven? how are my prayers to be accepted? He who pleaded my cause on Golgotha, and He who pleaded my cause in the court of law, He now as High Priest pleads my cause before the golden altar. IV. And Jesus has not yet concluded His pleading work. Personally I am looking for a day that is yet to dawn when JESUS WILL PERFECTLY PLEAD ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE ALL THE RIGHTS OF REDEMPTION. V. I have only dealt thus far with the Father and the Son, but it is the whole Trinity that pleads the cause of His people, and therefore our final point is this, that whilst Jesus has pleaded for me at Golgotha and does plead for me yonder in the court of Heaven, THE HOLY GHOST IS PLEADING MY CAUSE WITHIN. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The Advocate on high:*—How majestic are these appellations; and if we mark the variation of the appearance of the word "Lord," it opens to our view at once a fund of information and comfort which would be lost if that were overlooked. The first time the word is used, thy "Lord," the translators have given it to us in small letters, simply signifying a sovereign ruler and governor. The second time they have given it in capital letters, which method they adopted to distinguish the word "Jehovah" from the word "Adonai," or Lord. When the word "Jehovah" presents itself to our view, we are at once filled with a consciousness of the presence of a self-existent Being, giving being to all, deriving being from none, with all worlds at His command, and all creatures under His sway. And then to have the sovereign governor, the self-existent Deity, presented to our view in His covenant character as "thy God," is peculiarly sweet. There is a sevenfold preciousness in this introduction which Jehovah gives of Himself to the notice of His people, and that, too, under circumstances particularly affecting; because what the Lord was about to say to them was just called for by the exigencies in which they were placed. I. THE APPELLATIONS that are employed. "Thy Lord;" "the LORD;" "thy God." II. OUR CLAIM TO AN INTEREST IN THEM, as warranted by Scripture. I will refer to the infinite perfections of the Deity to be claimed by the poor worm of the earth. What, I allowed to claim Omniscience, Omnipotence to watch over me, Omnipresence to be my company, Immutability to be my security,

eternity the open prospect for me? What, I view all the perfections and attributes of the Deity, such as His justice, His holiness, His truth, His mercy, His faithfulness, everlastingly pledged for my salvation? This is something solid. What is requisite to prove the claim? You will find substantial proof nowhere but in spiritual life imparted to the soul. III. THE TRANSACTION REFERRED TO. "That pleadeth the cause of His people." 1. Let us first glance at the Divine, the sacred office assumed, as stated in the text, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That glorious Advocate is wise, faithful, condescending, affectionate. 2. The extraordinary nature of the cause of God's people. (1) There are three points in the pleading of the cause that must be kept in view. God pleads thy cause. Precious Advocate! (2) Moreover, He hath to plead for His people among the heathen; and this is implied in the text. When the people of Israel of old transgressed by idolatries and superstitions, by departures from God, and mingling with the heathen, Jehovah sent them into captivity, allowed their enemies to break in upon them, and to desolate their city and temple. And the heathen mocked them. "Where now is your God? Where is the God you serve? Do you think the King of glory can regard such beings as you?" But Jehovah pleads His own cause, and vindicates His own honour among the heathen. (3) But there is a worse feature relative to the cause, and that is rebellion in the heart of His own people. 3. The legal process. The only great mark of the legal process is for God's holiness to be vindicated. Then the process must be by exacting or by surety; and it must be by His life of obedience and His death of ignominy. If the legal process be pleading with the guilty, ruined sinner, there are two or three things I shall name. (1) He is apprehended. (2) He is accused. (3) He is acquitted. Acquitted, but He is condemned first. (*J. Irons.*)

CHAPTER LII.

VERS. 1-6. **Awake, awake.**—*The essential elements of a Church's strength:*—I. THE CONSTITUTIONAL ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH. I use the word constitution in a legitimate sense, as including both the creed and the polity of a Church. 1. The creed. As a man's life is the outcome of what he believes, or does not believe, precisely so is the Church's. But is not the Bible the acknowledged creed of all the Churches? No; no more than the stars are astronomy, or the flowers botany. The Bible is the source of the creed of all, but it is the creed of none, for the simple reason that the Bible, like every other writing, must be construed; and on many points it cannot be construed in the same way by all. 2. The government. Here also that which is true of man is true of the Church. An army is stronger than a mob. II. ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS. But a Church is not only obliged to have certain constitutional and other laws, it is also obliged to administer them for the twofold purpose—1. Of protecting itself against corruption and disintegration. 2. In order that it may efficiently fulfil its mission of witnessing for Christ, whereunto it was Divinely called. III. SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH. 1. Peace. There must be battles with the common enemy, but no battles with itself. 2. Unity. 3. Co-operation. 4. Purity. 5. The Holy Spirit. (*R. V. Foster, D.D.*) *God's call to a sleeping Church:*—1. This chapter is a trumpet-call to holiness. Jerusalem is called the holy city, and yet the passage is full of her sins. She was holy in the intention of God. So we are called not to be famous or wealthy but to be holy. 2. Her condition was characterized by—(1) Unhallowed intercourse with the world (ver. 1). The uncircumcised and unclean in her midst. (2) Slavish subserviency to the world (chap. li. 23). The moment the world sees Christians turning to it for pleasure or patronage, it becomes a very tyrant over them. (3) Utter helplessness and impotence. The figure of a "wild bull in a net" means strength reduced to helplessness by little things. Satan forged fetters of persecutions in early days, now he tries the "net business." Many Christians are worthless because caught in a net of little compromises with the world and with conscience. The "fainting" (ver. 20) points to the helplessness of the Christian Church in the presence of the moral and social evils of the day. (4) They were asleep to it all. 3. The man who called "Awake" to Zion, had previously cried "Awake" to God (chap. li. 9). 4. To be

awakened is not enough. If we go no further we shall go back either into indifference, or into rebellion, or into despair. The call is "put on thy strength, put on thy beautiful garments." Garments of praise, cloth of zeal, beautiful covering of humility. In this the Christian must be always arrayed, for we are children of a King, and God wants us always to appear in Court dress. (*C. Inwood.*) *Awake, O Zion:*—"O Zion!" This is a case in which a place is named for the inhabitants. Leaving what is local and temporary and particular in the reference of these words, we proceed to consider them as addressed by the redeeming God to His Church now, and as calling upon Christians to arouse themselves and revive, to bestir themselves, and to rise into a state of intelligent and Godlike activity. These words assume the presence of life in the people addressed. Those called to awake are not dead, but they sleep; and they sleep, so far as inactivity is concerned, as though they were dead. I. CERTAIN OBJECTS OF VISION ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CHURCH OF GOD, and that these may be kept in view, God saith, "Awake awake!" Among the objects which we need to see are things behind us; and things before us; such things as are presented by sacred history and by inspired promise and prophecy. But the objects which I would now emphatically name, are ever-existent and ever-present spiritual objects—God our one Father, the Son of God our only Saviour, and the Comforter, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son—especially the Son of God, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and as the propitiation which God has set forth. The things we need to see are the wondrous things contained in God's Word, things of God and of man, things which accompany salvation, things of angels and of devils, things of Christ, things of the world around us and above us and beneath us. The Church of God may be awake to lower and inferior things, and may be asleep to these highest things, or, if not asleep, but half awake, so that men seem like trees walking. II. CERTAIN SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND FOUNTAINS OF PLEASURE AND MEANS OF HELP ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CHURCH OF GOD, and that these may be possessed and enjoyed and used, God saith, "Awake, awake!" III. THERE IS GOOD AND GODLY WORK TO BE DONE BY ZION, therefore God saith, "Awake, awake." Zion is like a nursing mother, with her heart full of cares and her hands full of work. Zion is a worshipper, and she has the incense of prayer and the sacrifices of thanksgiving to provide and to offer; Zion is an intercessor, and it is expected that in ceaseless prayer she will keep no silence, nor give the hearer of prayer rest; Zion is an almoner, and it is expected that having freely received she will freely give; Zion is a servant of the most high God, and she is bound to do all that her hands find to do with all her might. Her work is so various that Zion is as a husbandman, and as a builder, and as a vine-dresser. For work and service Zion is Divinely endowed, taught of God that she may teach godliness, consoled by God that she may comfort others, guided by God that she may lift up her voice with strength, and cry to the bewildered and the lost, "This is the way, walk ye in it." There are two objects in the sphere of our present thought, toward which the Church of God requires to be faithful and therefore wakeful. 1. Her own endowments. 2. Her opportunities. IV. THERE ARE BATTLES WHICH ZION IS CALLED TO FIGHT, AND VICTORIES TO BE WON WHICH ZION ALONE CAN WIN; therefore God bids Zion awake. Having interpreted the voice, let us note some of its features and characteristics—1. The voice that would awaken us is Divine. It is the voice of a Ruler to His subjects, of a Master to His servants, of a Parent to His sons, of a Redeemer to His Redeemed. 2. The voice that would awaken us is powerful and full of majesty, a voice therefore that stirs, and that strengthens while it stirs him who listens to it. 3. The voice that would awaken us has in it a tone of reproach. It seems to say, "What! Zion asleep! Zion, already and recently quickened from the death of sin? Zion, who can see God, and the things that are eternal? Zion, who can possess the exceeding riches of God's grace? Zion, who can handle as her own the things which angels desire to look into? Zion asleep in the day of her work, and in the hour of her conflict?" 4. Yet this is a gracious voice. It is a voice that woos and wins while it stimulates and arouses. 5. The voice that cries, "Awake, awake," is the voice of Zion's God. There are degrees of wakefulness; and regarding the text as calling us to the most complete open-eyedness and watchfulness, let us arouse ourselves at God's bidding. (*S. Martin.*) *The Church asleep:*—Look at this solemn fact—the Church of the living God asleep! Here are they who have been quickened from the death of sin into newness of life, and who have been called to walk with the living God, asleep. The people who are summoned to work in the field of the world, and to labour in the vineyard of the kingdom of heaven, asleep. The only people who can reasonably be

expected to be awake and wide-awake, are asleep. Asleep, not in healthful, seasonable, necessary slumber, but asleep in the slumber of the sluggard, or the sleep of the drunkard, or the torpor of one smitten by atrophy or by apoplexy, or of one in a fatal swoon. (*Ibid.*) *What sends the Church to sleep?*—The intoxicating draught of some sinful carnal pleasure, or the opiate of some false doctrine, or the quietude of sinful inertness, or the darkness of cherished ignorance, or the monotony of formality, or the syren music of false teaching, hath sent Zion to sleep. (*Ibid.*) *The sleeping Church:*—Thus sleeping, Zion doth not sympathize with the circumstances by which she is surrounded, she does not see the objects within range of her vision, she does not feel the influences which are moving and working around her, she does not meet the claims made for exertion, she does not enjoy her mercies, or take possession of her lawful inheritance. (*Ibid.*) *The Church: its strength and its weakness:*—I. The text is a forcible reminder of the fact that THE CHURCH OF GOD, IN ALL AGES, MAY HAVE ITS TIMES OF WEAKNESS AS WELL AS ITS TIMES OF POWER. When the Church first went forth from Jerusalem, a little flock, scattered hither and thither by the storm of persecution, it was a time of power. It was then but an infant of days, but it sprang into a giant of strength. It was a day of power when the Church of Christ, as Paul Richter has said, "lifted empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel." But a thousand years roll on, and a time of weakness follows this era of power. The giant sleeps; his strength is put off; he reposes amidst the scarlet trappings and gilded blazonry of the Papacy, and seems to have wilted into a senile imbecility. But again there came a time of power when, on the morning of the Reformation, the Church heard the cry, "Awake, awake!" and, springing up with renewed youth, it put on its strength. There was a time of weakness when the chill of formalism followed in the track of the Reformation, and the Church sank into the coma of a widespread paralysis; again, when a disguised Romanism riveted her fetters; and still again when the Socinian apostasy spread its blight over Great Britain. But then came times of power when the Church arose in quickened majesty to smite the tyrant with the broken fetters which had eaten into its own soul; and still again, times of wondrous spiritual revival, when the call sounded by Wesley and Whitefield, like the voice of the prophet in the valley of vision, seemed to awake the dead. Why these periods of weakness? The principle is plain: Divine power and human strength must work together, each in its appropriate sphere. As the terror of the iron chariots of the enemy paralyzed the strength of Judah, so that, the human part being wanting, the victory was lost; so, in the Church, if any cause supervenes to weaken, or render ineffective, the strength which God expects us to put forth, He will not depart from His plan, or interpose to save us from the results of our own weakness, or to hide us from the scorn and derision of the world. II. WHAT IS THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH, AND WHEN IS IT PUT OFF? In other words, what causes may supervene to weaken or render it ineffective? 1. The first element of power is the Gospel, the Word, the truth of God. If the truth of God is the instrument of power, and the human part of the work is simply its manifestation, then the strength of the Church must be weakened whenever the Gospel is subordinated to human themes. 2. Let us pass to the second element of the Church's power—the ministry. The Church is a giant; the Gospel is the instrument of his work—the weapon of his warfare. But what wields the weapon? The giant's arm—this is the ministry. It is not an original power inherent in itself, but a delegated power. This is the power that, beginning at Jerusalem, went forth upon its mission of conquest—that made the heathen cry: "These men that have turned the world upside down are come hither also!" (1) The ministry, as an arm of power, may be withered by a perfunctory education. (2) The ministry may be ineffective from misdirected effort. (3) The ministry must be a source of weakness instead of power to the Church, if it is not in sympathy with the hearts of the people, and the souls of perishing men. 3. The third and principal element of the Church's power is the Holy Ghost. Since, then, the Spirit's power is the strength of the Church, the want of the Spirit is the weakness of the Church. If the Church is not an effective, aggressive power in the world, it is because it puts off or puts away the strength of the Spirit. This is done when we subordinate the Divine Spirit to human agency; when, by organization or by human eloquence, or by methods and appliances, or by running the Church on business principles, we seek to effect that which it is the special office of the Spirit to accomplish. It is greatly to be feared that we put away the strength of the Spirit when the Church—the whole Church, the ministry and the people, fail to realize our profound and absolute

dependence upon the power of the Spirit for success in all work. III. Let us listen to GOD'S CALL TO THE CHURCH TO PUT ON AND TO PUT FORTH HER STRENGTH. How shall we put on this strength? Power with God, in its first element, is the sense of our own weakness. How, then, shall we put on strength? 1. On our knees. 2. Let us put on the strength of the Word, as the apostle did, when he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. 3. Let us put on the strength of the ministry, as Paul did when he went forth in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace. 4. Let us put on the strength of the Spirit, as the early Church did when it was endued with power from on high. Then shall our work be "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." (*W. M. Paxton, D.D.*) "*Awake, Awake!*"—Let us take the central paragraph first (chap. li. 17). There Jerusalem is addressed as stupefied by some intoxicating potion. But her drunkenness is not of wine, nor of strong drink; she has drunk at the hand of the Lord "the cup of His fury." Such imagery is often used by the prophets, of the cup of God's wrath drunk down by those on whom it descends, and inflicting on them the insensibility and stupefaction with which we are but too familiar as the effect of excessive drinking. The whole city has succumbed under the spell. Her sons have fainted, and lie strewn in all the streets, like antelopes snared in the hunters' nets, from which their struggles have failed to extricate them. Amid such circumstances, the servant of Jehovah is introduced, crying, "Awake, awake! stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury." There are other soporifics than the wrath of God: the air of the enchanted ground; the laudanum of evil companionship; the drugs of worldly pleasure, of absorption in business, of carnal security. The army of the Lord is too apt to put off the armour of light, and resign itself to heavy slumbers, till the clarion voice warns it that it is high time to awake. I. ZION'S APPEAL TO GOD. "Awake, awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord." 1. The first symptom of awaking is a cry. It is so with a child. It is so with the soul. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, the heavenly watchers said, "Behold, he prayeth." It is so with the Church. 2. The cry in this case was founded on a mistake. If there are variations in our inner life, it is because our rate of reception differs from time to time. It is not God who sleeps, but we. It is not for God to awake, but for us. It is not necessary for the Divine arm to gird on strength, but for the human to take that which is within its easy reach. 3. The cry is short and earnest. Earnestness is good, even though at first it may be in a wrong direction. 4. The best basis for our cry is memory of the past. "Art thou not it that cut Rahab (*i. e.* Egypt) in pieces, that pierced the dragon" (*i. e.* of the Nile)? It is well to quote past experiences as arguments for faith. 5. The arm of God is strong (chap. li. 13). 6. The arm of God is far-reaching. However low we sink, underneath are the everlasting arms. 7. The arm of God is tender (chap. li. 12). II. THE APPEAL TO ZION. It is blessed to be awaked out of sleep. Life is passing by so rapidly; the radiant glory of the Saviour may be missed unless we are on the alert, or we may fail to give Him the sympathy He needs, and an angel will be summoned to do our work. Besides, the world needs the help of men who give no sleep to their eyes nor slumber to their eyelids, but are always eager to help it in its need. Being awake, we shall discover two sets of attire awaiting us. The first is strength, the other beauty; and each has its counterpart in the New Testament (Eph. vi.; Col. iii.). Put on the whole armour of God. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ—His temper, spirit, and character. 1. We must put on our beautiful garments. We cannot weave these. We are not able to spin such a cocoon out of our own nature, nor are we required to do so. They are all prepared for us in Jesus; we have only to put them on, by putting Him on. This can only be done when the heart is at leisure. 2. We must put on strength. We are not bidden to purchase strength, or generate it by our resolutions, prayers, and agonizings; but to "put it on." It is already prepared, and only awaits appropriation. 3. We must expect to be delivered from the dominion of sin. Babylon had been bidden to descend from her throne and sit in the dust; Jerusalem is commanded to arise from the dust and sit on her throne. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *A call to exertion:*—I. THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH JUSTIFY THIS APPEAL. 1. It is obvious that the passage assumes the possession of sufficient strength for accomplishing the end designed. As to effectual agency, all things are of God. With respect to our own province, that of instrumental action—our strength is ample, though the conversion of the world be the object of it. But wherein does our strength for the reconciliation of the world consist? Strength, in all cases, is the possession of adapted and sufficient means. Now the means of converting a sinner is the truth of the Gospel.

Is Divine truth adapted and sufficient to this end? To this point inspired testimony is most direct and express. Matters of fact bring us to the same point. If any attempt should be made to evade the argument, by referring to the necessity of Divine influence, we reply that Divine influence is undoubtedly necessary to give the Gospel success. But it is also necessary to give success to the use of means in every other case. If there be in our hands adapted and sufficient means for bringing about the universal triumphs of the Gospel, there is manifest justice in the stirring appeal by which we are roused into action. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion!" Persons who would reply to such a call, "What is the use of telling me to labour?—it is God who must do everything," would merely subject themselves to a severe reproof, and a direct charge of making their pretended want of power a pretext for their love of sloth. 2. The text assumes the existence of inadequate exertion. It is appropriate only to a state of comparative indolence and slumber. The language calls not for a partial, but for an entire employment of our resources. "Put on thy strength." The meaning cannot be less than this: The scenes which are in prospect will require your utmost efforts; the victory will be quite as much as you will be able to win; put into requisition, therefore, all your powers, and exert your whole strength. II. THE TOPICS BY WHICH THIS CALL MAY BE ENFORCED. 1. Notice the interesting character of the object to be attained. The end contemplated in the text was personally and directly interesting to the parties addressed. Zion was called to exert herself for her own triumphs. It was for their restoration to the land of their fathers that the slumbering exiles were summoned to awake. We also should remember that the triumphs of Christianity are our triumphs, and the increase of the Church is our enlargement. Are we willing that the Church should continue to be small and despised, or do we really wish to see her arrayed in celestial beauty, and the joy of the whole earth? The interests of Zion are identified with those of a guilty and perishing world. The advancement of Zion is identified with the glory of her Lord. 2. The proximity of the most blessed results. Triumphs, and even our ultimate triumphs are at hand. The prospect of success is one of the most natural stimulants to exertion. 3. The necessity of exertion in order to the expected results. 4. The actual suspension of the issue upon our obedience. It suggests the animating sentiment, that the final glories of the Church are waiting for her awaking, and for that alone. (*J. H. Hinton, M.A.*) *The Church's duty towards the world:*—In verse 9, of the former chapter, the Church prays God to interfere on her behalf, to exert His omnipotent arm. In the seventeenth verse He calls upon the Church to do something to gain this object. And in my text, which is connected with that exhortation, He repeats it: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion," etc. If then, we would have the arm of the Lord with us in anything we do for His cause, we must do more than pray. I. THE SPIRIT WHICH GOD ENJOINS HIS CHURCH TO EVINCE. The language of the text is metaphorical, and highly poetical; but it inculcates upon us, that we put on—1. A spirit of wakefulness. Wakefulness is opposed to indifference and sloth. 2. A spirit of aggression. "Put on thy strength, O Zion." For what purpose? Certainly to oppose her foes; to make aggressions on the territory of the master spirit of evil. And what is the Church's "strength," which she is to put on? It consists in a large measure of Divine influences. The Church's "strength" consists in spiritual wisdom and spiritual courage. The "strength" of the Church consists in the cheerful assurance of God's love to us individually—in having it "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And it consists in daily communion with God. Come with me back to Pentecostal days, and see how the Church acted when thus equipped. She "put on her strength," and went forth in a spirit of aggression. 3. A spirit of piety. "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." (1) What are the "beautiful garments" of the Church? Let the prophet expound his own language (chap. lxi. 10). These they are to "put on," as on marriage days, as on holy-days, as on days of rejoicing. (2) As garments are for dignity and beauty, so the Church is only beautiful when thus clothed. They are for defence and protection also, and in them as in a movable garrison we go about, resisting the inclemency of the weather; and these guard us against the curses of God's law, and all the evils resulting from our misery and wretchedness. They distinguish between the sexes, and denote the station; and so the Church's garments distinguish her from the world. (3) The Church "puts on" these garments, when she applies to Christ by faith and exhibits the fruits of His salvation in her life and conduct. Our Lord so interprets it: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." And when

holiness and faith meet in the character, how beautiful is it, and how fit for action! II. THE EFFECTS WHICH WILL NECESSARILY AND CERTAINLY RESULT IF THE CHURCH OBEYS THE INJUNCTION OF HER LORD. 1. The conversion of souls. "There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean;" metaphors descriptive of pollution arising from an unconverted state. Unregenerate souls shall not be found within her borders. This has been the result everywhere. 2. The union of the ministers of the Gospel. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing." 3. The renovation of the world (ver. 10). (*J. Sherman.*) *The Church's strength:*—Strength is that which resides in a man, but is not exhibited save in so far as it is exercised and produces results. His garments, on the other hand, are visible to those who look at him; they constitute his outward appearance. So that this text refers both to the inward powers and capabilities of Christ's Church, and to the visible aspect which it presents to the world. Zion has strength. The Church has sufficient means and power at its disposal to effect the purposes for which the Lord founded it. Those purposes are various in form, but perhaps they may be all summed up in the phrase—to impart to men the knowledge of their Saviour. I. Let me mention one or two THINGS WHICH ARE GOOD AND USEFUL FOR THEIR PROPER WORK, BUT OF WHICH IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT ZION'S STRENGTH LIES IN THEM. 1. The recognition of religion by the State and its establishment by law. We find, as a matter of history, that in many cases when the favour of the governing powers has been most decided, the efficacy of the Church in converting sinners and spreading the Gospel has been feeble and languid; while, on the other hand, some of Zion's most energetic and successful efforts have been made without any support at all from the secular authority, and even in spite of its opposition. 2. An active ministry. There are two aspects of this activity—by activity I understand diligence in preaching, in visiting the sick, in holding services, and so on. If the clergy are active because the people are zealous, then it is altogether well: it is a mark of strength. But if the clergy are active because no one else is, then it is a mark of weakness. 3. The multiplication of religious societies and other machinery. They are good, useful, necessary things. But they are too often made the excuse for serving God by proxy. The strength of the Church lies in the zeal for Christ of its individual members. II. "Put on the garments of thy dignity," continues the prophet, "O Jerusalem, the Holy City." THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH OUGHT TO BE SUCH AS TO COMMAND THE ADMIRATION EVEN OF THOSE WHO DO NOT BELONG TO IT. We may instance—1. The garment of righteousness. The people of God ought to present unmistakably the aspect of a righteous people. 2. The garment of unity. It must be confessed that the servants of God do not present to the world the aspect of a united people. It is not simply difference of opinion that separates them: but there are slanders, mutual recriminations, misrepresentations of motives and conduct, suspicions, jealousies, party-spirit in all its hideous forms, combining to rend and ruin the beautiful garment of brotherhood in which Jerusalem ought to be clad. 3. The garment of worship. The Church ought to appear before all men as a city wherein the Lord is worshipped, where He receives the honour due unto His name. The true beauty of holiness is the sincere devotion of the people, and the natural result of such devotion, viz. a really united offering of prayer and praise ascending to the throne of the heavenly grace. (*J. C. Rust, M.A.*) *Relapses in the history of the Church:*—Only two or three centuries after the death of the last of the apostles, history informs us, Christians were scarcely distinguishable from pagans. The golden-tongued and spiritually-minded Chrysostom would go home on Sundays from his pulpit in Antioch in Syria only to weep bitterly over the indifference of the Church and its defection from its first love. One has only to glance at the history of the Church during the Middle Ages to see that, through all those dark centuries, the Church was about as dark as the world, and but little less corrupt. The common people universally were forbidden to read the Bible, and would not have been able to read it had they been permitted to do so. Popes and cardinals, archbishops and bishops and all the lower orders of clergy had but little more hesitancy in committing murder, and all the sins in the decalogue, than they had in attending mass. The Savonarolas who stood up here and there and preached a better morality and a purer Gospel may be counted on the fingers of one hand. And the Church manifested its gratitude to them by burning them at the stake. (*R. V. Foster, D.D.*) *The Church tenacious of its life:*—The Church, by reason of the heavenly element in it, is like a tree of the forest—tenacious of its life; when the old trunk dies a fresh twig springs from its roots; and when this decays another fresh twig springs up

in its turn. So Luther and his collaborators, by the grace of God, evoked from the dead Church of the Middle Ages a fresh and vigorous Protestantism. So Wesley and his co-workers evoked from the deadness of the later Anglicanism a still fresh and vigorous Methodism. The Presbyterian Church of John Knox also grew old, and has had its athletic offshoots. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion"—and Zion after the awakening is never the Zion of the pre-awakening. (*Ibid.*) *Zion's awakening*:—Is the injunction obsolete? By no means. And the Church-catholic to-day is in the act of obeying it. Let us notice two or three significant indications—1. Never in any period of the world's history has the Bible been more universally and intensely studied than it is now. And the study of it is far, very far, from being prevailingly hostile. 2. As another indication of this fact I quote the old saying, "In union there is strength;" especially is it true when other essential elements of strength are not wanting. In this day there is a visible tendency towards union. 3. Another indication is the rapid progress in mission work. (*Ibid.*) Put on thy strength, O Zion.—*Zion's strength*:—What is the strength of Zion? The strength of any community is primarily in the individuals who constitute it; so that the strength of the Church of God is, not entirely, but first of all, in the separate members of that body. The strength of Zion is also the power of every religious principle. It is the power of faith and hope and love; the power of patience and perseverance and courage and meekness. There is strength in all life, and Zion lives with the rich and full and eternal life of God within her. Knowledge is power, and the Church of the living God has the highest kind of knowledge. A settled faith is power, and Zion has a fixed and positive belief. Confidence and trust are power, and the Church of God relies upon God. Hope is power, and the hope of the Church is as an anchor sure and steadfast. Love is power, and godly charity never faileth. Patience, perseverance and courage are powers, before which obstacles yield and dangers flee away, and the Church of God is trained to be patient and steadfast and brave. The strength of Zion is the power of certain agencies and influences. The Church has power in her testimony to truth, in her intercession before God, and in her character as the leaven of society and the salt of the nations. Union is strength where alliance is wise and entire; where heart sympathizes with heart and hand joins in hand. We proceed to state reasons why God should thus speak to His Church. I. GOD BIDS ZION PUT ON HER STRENGTH FOR SELF-MANIFESTATION. Not for self-magnification. Self-magnification is disloyal, traitorous and impious; self-manifestation is a plain duty (Matt. v. 16). The Church of God can walk and work and endure; then why appear impotent and helpless? Strong winds make themselves heard. Strong sunshine makes itself felt. Strong life shows itself, whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom. And the Church, to be heard and seen and felt and known, must be strong. II. GOD BIDS ZION PUT ON HER STRENGTH THAT HE MAY BE GLORIFIED. A redeemed man is a new creation and a Divine workmanship. A congregation of believing men, and the whole visible Church, are of God's founding. Ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building. Now if the husbandry appear as the field of the slothful, and as the vineyard of the man void of understanding; if it be all grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof be [broken down; if the building appear to be defective in foundation, imperfect in construction, and framed together with bad material—the name of God, instead of being honoured, will be blasphemed (1 Peter ii. 9, 10; Isa. xliii. 21). III. GOD REQUIRES ZION TO PUT OUT HER STRENGTH FOR THE SAKE OF HER OWN WELL-BEING. If the powers of the Church be inactive, they will decline. The staff of faith, if never used, will decay, etc. IV. ZION IS REQUIRED TO PUT ON HER STRENGTH IN ORDER TO MEET THE CLAIMS OF A SINFUL AND SUFFERING WORLD. V. GOD DIRECTS ZION TO PUT ON HER STRENGTH BECAUSE STRENGTH HAS BEEN GIVEN HER TO PUT ON. VI. IS NOT THIS PUTTING ON OF STRENGTH AS ESSENTIAL TO ZION'S PEACE AND JOY AS TO HER OUTWARD PROSPERITY? (*S. Martin.*) *The strength of Zion* is the strength of human nature. It is masculine energy, feminine susceptibility, the vivacity of childhood, the buoyancy of youth, and the force of maturity. It is the power of body, soul and spirit. It is intellectual power, emotional force, and moral strength. It is the strength of regenerated humanity, therefore spiritual and religious power; the strength of man redeemed unto God, and as redeemed, allied to God, dwelt in by God, and made strong by union with God. The strength of Zion is the strength of all that redeemed humanity is, and of all that is within human nature when regenerated and sanctified by the grace of God. (*Ibid.*) *Strength put on by being put out*:—If a man put out his

strength, he puts on strength, he appears clothed with strength as with a garment. Virgil furnishes us with an illustration: Æneas visits Drepanum in Sicily, and there by various games celebrates the anniversary of his father's death. The combatants with the cestus are described. Dares first shows his face with strength prodigious, and rears himself amid loud murmurs from the spectators. He uplifts his lofty head, presents his broad shoulders, brandishes his arms and beats the air with his fists. And Entellus accepted his challenge, flung from his shoulders his vest, bared his huge limbs, his big bones and sinewy arms, and stood forth of mighty frame in the middle of the field. Forthwith each on his tiptoes stood erect, and undaunted raised his arms aloft in the air. Dares and Entellus, as they put out strength, put on strength. A working-man and a trained athlete, when asleep or otherwise in repose, appear clothed with weakness. All the muscles are relaxed, and the limbs are motionless and apparently powerless, as the parts of a marble statue. But when the athlete is engaged in some bodily exercise, or the working-man is handling his tools and lifting his materials, his appearance is that of one arrayed with power. As he puts out strength he puts on strength, nor can he put it out without putting it on. Adapting the expression of the idea to common utterance, we may read our text, "Put out thy strength, O Zion." (*Ibid.*) *Injunctions to be strong:*—My text harmonizes with words frequently addressed to Zion and to her sons (1 Kings ii. 2; 1 Chron. xxviii. 10; Isa. xxxv. 4; xl. 9, 31; Haggai ii. 4; Zech. viii. 9 13; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1). (*Ibid.*) *God's call to be strong:*—It is interesting to observe by how many voices God speaks as in our text. By the smarting of the conscience when the strength is withheld, and by the glowing of the conscience when the strength is consecrated; by the breadth of love which God's law requires, and by the depth of privilege which the Gospel provides; by the correction administered when we are inactive and inert, and by the blessedness experienced when we abound in the work of the Lord, God is continually saying, "Put on thy strength, O Zion." (*Ibid.*) *Some elements of Church strength:*—1. Soundness in doctrine. 2. Purity of life among the members of the Church. 3. Thoroughness of organization for Church work. 4. Faithfulness in individual effort to do good. 5. Regularity of attendance upon the services of the Church. 6. Pecuniary liberality. 7. Unity among the members. 8. A prayerful spirit. 9. An abiding faith in the presence of God with the Church. Where these are to be found the Church will be strong. (*D. Winters.*) *The elements of the Church's strength:*—I. THE GREATNESS OF HER AIMS. Great aims enthused great souls, and the Church proposed the conquest of the world for Christ. II. THE MATCHLESS POWER OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH, which may be illustrated by the distinctively Christian doctrines of our moral ruin, redemption through a Divine-human Saviour, the possibility of a regenerate life, and the blessedness of an immortal hope. III. But these doctrines needed a voice; hence another element of the Church's strength is A WITNESSING MEMBERSHIP. All Christians may witness for the truth by the testimony of the lips, and also by the silent but potent ministry of the life. IV. Another mighty force in the service of the Church is A CO-OPERATIVE PROVIDENCE. V. THE ENDOWMENT OF THE HOLY GHOST. (*Bp. W. X. Winde.*) *The supreme point of energy:*—Men can rouse themselves to action. We cannot live continuously in ecstasy; we must live under ourselves, so to speak, or life will become a pain and a failure. We are, however, to have periods of special effort, hours of rapture, times of inspiration and sense of mightiness beyond all that is ordinary. There is more power in man than he may be aware of, and he should inquire what objects and pursuits are worthy of his enthusiastic devotion. Drive a horse from home, and in the course of the day he will show weariness which you may regard as a sign of utter exhaustion; but turn his head homeward, and see what a change takes place! How willingly he runs! How swiftly! He has "put on his strength"! Work for a person who is not a favourite, and the hands soon tire: every effort is a weariness to the flesh, every thought wears the mind; on the other hand, serve a person who is beloved, etc. Undertake any engagement which does not excite the interest of the heart, and how soon it becomes irksome. The mother waits upon her sick child, and wonders how she can endure so much. The mystery is in the love. We are strong when we work in the direction of our will. Where the will is right, the strength will assert itself. The question is not one of muscle but of purpose. What objects, then, are worthy of "all our strength, all our mind, and all our heart"? We may get at the answer negatively as well as positively. I. NO OBJECT WHICH BEARS UPON THIS WORLD ONLY IS WORTHY OF THE SUPREME ENERGY OF MAN. Even in secular affairs we work by laws of proportion and adaptation. If a man employed a steam-engine to draw a cork, we should justly accuse him

of wasting power. If a man spent his days and nights in carving cherry-stones, we should say he was wasting his life. We have a common saying—"the game is not worth the candle"—showing that in common affairs we do recognize the law of proportion, and the law that results do determine the value of processes. If, then, in the lower, how much more in the higher! Think of a being like man spending his lifetime in writing his name in the dust! There is a success which is not worth securing. Suppose a man should get all the money he can possibly accumulate; all the fame; all the luxury—what does it amount to? II. SPIRITUAL OBJECTS ARE ALONE WORTHY OF THE SUPREME ENERGY OF MAN. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. 1. They are akin to his own nature. 2. They touch every point of his being. 3. They prepare him for the solemnity and service of the future. Boundless are the prospects of the spiritual thinker! His library, the universe! His companions, the angels! His Teacher, God! In view of such prospects, how time dwindles, and how earth passes as a wreath of smoke! The spiritual thinker is independent of all the influences which make up the small world of the materialist—his citizenship is in heaven. III. THE FACT THAT SPIRITUAL OBJECTS ALONE ARE WORTHY OF THE SUPREME ENERGY OF MAN SHOULD IMPEL TO DECISIVE ACTION. Put on thy strength—1. For the time is short. 2. For the enemy is on the alert. 3. For the Master is worthy. The text addresses a call to the Church. The call is to activity. He who gives the call will give the grace. The Church is not to be feeble and tottering; it is to be strong, valiant, heroic. He who can do without the help of the strongest is graciously pleased to accept the service of the meanest. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Effort gives strength*:—I. PUT ON STRENGTH BY WAKEFULNESS. A slumbering life results in moral death. II. PUT ON STRENGTH BY ACTIVITY. Activity imparts physical strength. We have only to look at the compact and knotted lump of muscle on the blacksmith's forearm. The rower's chest is expanded by his exertions. The practised wrestler grips with an ironlike grasp the limbs of his opponent. Even a Samson is divested of his prowess by lolling in the lap of a Delilah. We put on intellectual strength by keeping the brain forces constantly moving. But most of all the moral and spiritual nature is strengthened by exercise. Great is the power of habit. It is a kind of second nature, and is the grand resultant of repeated acts. III. PUT ON STRENGTH BY DEVELOPMENT. Art thou but a bruised reed, put on thy strength! Hast thou but one talent, put it out to usury. Moral and spiritual strength may be developed to the latest hour of a Methuselah's life, and eternity will be but an ampler sphere for the enlargement of the soul's vast powers. IV. PUT ON STRENGTH BY JOYFULNESS. Joy begets strength, and strength increases joy. V. PUT ON STRENGTH BY HOPEFULNESS. The despairing are weak; but the hopeful are strong. I will endeavour, is the inspiring language of the hopeful. The Church may well be hopeful, for God's promise is given for her encouragement. VI. PUT ON STRENGTH BY UNITED PRAYER. The Church's prosperous times are the praying times. The praying man is the strong man. (*W. Burrows, B.A.*) *Strength increased by use*:—A lady was watching a potter at his work, whose one foot was kept with "never-slackening speed turning his swift wheel round," while the other rested patiently on the ground. When the lady said to him, in a sympathizing tone, "How tired your foot must be!" the man raised his eyes and said, "No, ma'am; it isn't the foot that works that's tired; it's the foot that stands. That's it." If you want to keep your strength, use it; if you want to get tired, do nothing. (*Christian Budget.*) *The danger of inaction*:—A magnet is sometimes seen in a chemist's laboratory, suspended against a wall, and loaded heavily with weights. We ask the reason, and the scientist replies, "The magnet was losing power, because it had not been used for some time. I am restoring its force by giving it something to do." (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

Ver. 2. **Shake thyself from the dust.**—*Sin as dust*:—It is very often what we call little sins which mar the beauty of the Church. They are like dust. Dust comes imperceptibly, it settles down so silently, that not an insect hears it fall; it is caused by our ordinary avocations and not by exceptional events; and if neglected long, becomes thicker and thicker, till all that is fair and beautiful is lost. "Shake thyself from the dust," etc. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) "*Arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem*":—Rather, Arise, sit up, O Jerusalem. When Vespasian had subdued Judæa, money was stamped with a woman sitting in the dust, with this inscription, "Judæa subacta." (*J. Trapp.*)

Ver. 3. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought.—*Sold for*

nought; redeemed without price:—"Ye have sold yourselves for nought." You got nothing by it, nor did I. God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves, He Himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole title to them, did not increase His wealth by the price (Ps. xliv. 12). They did not so much as pay their debts to Him with it. The Babylonians gave Him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed His name upon that account; and therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; you shall be redeemed without price, as was promised (chap. xlv. 13). (*M. Henry.*) *Selling oneself for nought:*—It appears to have been no unusual thing amongst the ancient Jews for a man who was sunk in debt and difficulties, and reduced to the extreme of poverty, to sell himself, or to be sold by his creditors, as a bondsman for a certain term of years. There seems to be an allusion to this circumstance in the text before us. In its strict and primary sense it relates peculiarly to the nation of the Jews, who by a long course of wicked and rebellious conduct had sold themselves, as it were, into the hands of their enemies; that is to say, their wickedness had been the immediate cause of their being delivered up by God into the hands of the Babylonians, who had reduced them into abject slavery. And they are said to have sold themselves "for nought," inasmuch as there was nothing in the fruits and consequences of their sin to compensate for the miserable state into which it had reduced them. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Redeemed without money:*—Did the Lord perform His word? Yes; for, after they had remained in their bondage during the time God had appointed it to last, He stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, a heathen king, to set them free. And on what terms? Captive exiles commonly pay dear for their deliverance. But what sum did Cyrus ask when he gave the Jews their liberty? Nothing whatsoever. He literally sent them home without the smallest recompense; without requiring or expecting anything at their hands. "They were redeemed without money." (*Ibid.*) *Accusation and promise:*—A redemption, far more precious than the temporal redemption of Israel from their Babylonish bondage, is to be considered as here hinted at. I. THE AWFUL ACCUSATION. It is twofold. 1. That we have sold ourselves. The figure here employed is used in other passages of Scripture, to express the conduct of the sinner in abandoning himself to Satan's service. Thus of Ahab it is said, "he did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord;" and of the people whom he governed, "they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger." St. Paul adopts a similar expression in reference to himself, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." In all these places the idea under which the conduct of sinners is described is that of a man selling himself for a slave. And under this guilt we are every one of us included. 2. That we have sold ourselves "for nought." (1) Look at the inducements of our sins—at the motives which led us to commit them. O how lightly and how cheaply have we yielded ourselves up to Satan's service! He has not needed, as in our Lord's case, to promise all "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;" he has not needed to tempt us with large offers or golden baits. (2) Look again to the consequences of our sins. There have been many times, no doubt, when we have committed sin in expectation of some great advantage to be gained by it. But what has been the price? Bitter disappointment, pain, grief, anguish, and in the end, everlasting death. Such have been the only fruits which men have ever gathered from their sins. II. THE MOST GRACIOUS PROMISE OR PROPOSAL. "Ye shall be redeemed," etc. "As freely as you have given yourselves up to ruin, so freely am I ready to deliver you from that ruin." Considered in this light, in what a striking manner does my text present to us the riches of God's grace towards a ruined world! But to comprehend this matter more distinctly, look at the Cross of Jesus! (*Ibid.*) *Self-selling:*—The whole world is an emporium; buying and selling are going on everywhere. The text refers to the sale of self. I. It is the most COMMON SALE in the emporium of the world. What do I mean by self? Not the body, not the mere bundle of intellectual faculties, but the conscience, the moral *ego*, the "inner man," that which works the faculties and which will live when the body is dust. Now, men are selling this manhood for a variety of things. 1. For pleasure. The voluptuary and the debauchee have sold it, and it is gone far into the mud of sensuality. 2. For wealth. The worldling has sold it, and it is gone into the miserly grub. 3. For fame. The aspirant for worldly honours and distinctions has sold it, and it is lost in the rolling current of fashion. II. It is the most FOOLISH SALE in the emporium of the world. "Sold yourselves for nought." The man who has sold it for pleasure, what has he got? "Nought." What is sensual pleasure but the

pleasure of animals at best? and this wears out as animal life decays. "Desire faileth." The man who has sold it for wealth, what has he got? That which will soon "take wings and fly away." "What shall it profit a man?" etc. The man who has sold it for fame, what has he got? That which, if aromatic to-day, may be a stench to-morrow, and never at any time self-satisfying. Charles Lamb had fame, and what did he say? "I walk up and down, thinking I am happy, but knowing I am not." III. It is the most UNRIGHTEOUS SALE in the emporium of the world. No man has a right to sell his soul. "All souls are Mine," saith God. Reason says you have no right to sell your soul; you are not self-produced nor self-sustained. Conscience says you have no right to sell your soul; as you barter it away, it groans damnation at you. God made the soul to investigate His works, adore His character and serve His will. (*Homilist.*) *Man unregenerate and regenerate:*—I. WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF MANKIND WHEN UNREGENERATE? In a state of sin, the text hath represented us as selling ourselves for nought; where each word is emphatical, and carries a peculiar sting in it. 1. We take upon us to drive a bargain where we have no propriety in what we expose to sale. What the prophet here charges us with exposing to sale is ourselves; and this, in other words, implies our souls, with all the interest which they have elsewhere depending upon our behaviour. Now in these our propriety is strictly and truly derivative and borrowed; it was God who made us, and not we ourselves; and every faculty and every power wherewith He hath entrusted us are employed injuriously whenever they run counter to His will and pleasure. 2. Let us consider what we are doing when we are selling ourselves. Our souls which were made to be immortal are the things we are bartering in this foolish bargain. And when once we have parted with them, what would we not give in exchange for them, to have them again, and save them? 3. The folly is yet farther aggravated by the consideration whereupon we are induced to this wretched bargain. For the text hath charged us with "selling ourselves for nought." II. WHAT WHEN REGENERATE? What Christ hath done for us in the affair of our redemption, by cancelling the hand-writing which lay against us, was on His part free grace and bounty. Our redemption being conditional, proceed we to consider the terms whereunto it is limited. 1. Repentance from dead works. 2. Faith. 3. A sincere obedience will naturally follow. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *The sinner's ruin and recovery:*—I. THE SOLEMN STATEMENT. II. A JOYFUL PROMISE. "And ye shall be redeemed without money." 1. This redemption could not be effected by human means. 2. Nor is this redemption provided by the law which the sinner has transgressed. 3. It must be effected in a way that will secure the honour of the Divine law, as well as the salvation of the sinner. There is redemption by price, and redemption by power, and each is suited to our state. 4. The redemption of man was effected by Christ at a great price. "Ye shall be redeemed without money." As the misery to which the sinner was exposed was infinite, so his deliverance required infinite means. 5. The effect of these sufferings is our redemption from captivity, and deliverance from the curse of the law. By faith, therefore, in the sacrifice of the Saviour deliverance is to be obtained. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) **Ye shall be redeemed without money.**—*The cheapness of moral redemption:*—Redemptions, social, commercial, and political, are generally very costly things. Millions of lives have been sacrificed, and untold treasures of gold expended in order to redeem from temporal bondage. But true moral redemption—the redemption of the soul from error to truth, from selfishness to benevolence, from the devil to God—is cheap. "Without money." I. THE MEANS OF MORAL REDEMPTION COST NOTHING. 1. You have Christ for nothing, He has given Himself. 2. You have the Bible for nothing. 3. You have the Spirit for nothing. No man can excuse himself for his moral bondage on the ground that he is too poor to obtain the means of redemption. II. THE LABOUR INVOLVES NO SACRIFICE. Every moral bondsman must labour if he would be free, there is no moral emancipation irrespective of individual effort. Each captive must strike some hearty strokes ere his chains can be broken. But in this work there is no effort involving secular sacrifice. It need not prevent a man pursuing his ordinary avocations. He can be working out his freedom as well, if not better, when cultivating his farm, plying his handicraft, pursuing his merchandise, as alone in his chamber on his knees. III. THE STRUGGLES CONDUCE TO TEMPORAL PROSPERITY (Matt. vi. 33; 1 Tim. iv. 8). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 5. **My name continually every day is blasphemed.**—*God pitiful, yet indignant:*—1. The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise Him; but,

instead of that, they are continually howling, which grieves Him, and moves His pity. 2. The natives are so insolent that they will not praise Him; but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts Him and moves His anger. (*M. Henry.*) *Blasphemy*:—I. ITS NATURE. II. ITS GUILT. III. ITS AWFUL PREVALENCE. IV. ITS CERTAIN PUNISHMENT. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *Blaspheming God's name*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE NAME OF THE LORD? His perfections, titles, etc. II. THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH IT IS BLASPHEMED. 1. By denying His existence (Ps. x. 4; xiv. 1; liii. 1). 2. By denying His sovereignty (Job xxi. 14, 15; Ex. v. 2). 3. By denying His truth (Gen. iii. 4; Isa. xxxvi. 15; 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4). 4. By denying His power (2 Kings vii. 2; xviii. 30, 32–35; Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20). 5. By denying His omnipotence and omniscience (Job xxii. 13, 14; Ps. x. 11; lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7; Isa. xxix. 15; Ezek. viii. 12). 6. By accusing Him of injustice (Jer. xii. 1; Ezek. xviii. 25; xxxiii. 17; Mal. ii. 17; iii. 15). 7. By murmuring against His dispensations (Isa. xlv. 9; Exod. xiv. 11, 12). 8. By false swearing, oaths and curses, etc. III. THE EXCUSES USUALLY MADE FOR IT. Ignorance, custom, example, surprise, passion, confirmation of what is said, meaning no harm, inconsistencies of professors, etc. (2 Sam. xii. 14; Ezek. xxxvi. 20; Rom. ii. 24; 2 Pet. ii. 2). IV. THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF IT. Destroys the little remains of the fear of God. Leads to the disobedience of all His commands. Sets a horrid example to others, especially to the young. V. THE POWERFUL ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT. The Lord is our glorious and lawful Sovereign, who sees and hears all things. He is a holy and jealous God, before whose bar we must appear. He is fully able to punish, and has assured us that He will (2 Kings xix. 22, 28; Isa. xxxvii. 23, 36–38; Ezek. xx. 27, 33; xxxv. 12–14). (*A. Tucker.*)

Ver. 7. **How beautiful upon the mountains.**—*Messengers of redemption*:—Messengers coming over the mountains announce to Jerusalem the people's redemption from Babylon, and the advent of Jehovah's eternal kingdom. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Beautiful feet*:—The exclamation does not refer to the pretty sound of their footsteps, but their feet are as if they were winged, because it is a joyful message which they bring. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Gospel of the swift-footed messengers* is the Gospel of the kingdom of God which is at hand. (*Ibid.*) *Good tidings of good*:—I. THE PRIMARY MEANING. The passage is supposed to refer to the sending forth the heralds of the conquering Persian to proclaim liberty to the Jews that groaned under captivity in Babylon (Ezra i. 2, 3.) In order fully to understand the joy and gladness which such a proclamation as this must necessarily bring to the poor Jew mourning in captivity, we must have some conception of their condition, and the feelings that swelled in their hearts during that period of degradation and suffering. Of this, some idea may be formed from the lamentations of Jeremiah, which speak the language of the believing Israelite, mourning over the fall of Zion; and again, in Ps. cxxxvii. we find the captive Jews describing their bitter sorrows. Even as the prophet Isaiah foretold, this deliverance came to the people of God, great and sudden; but God had promised, and He surely brought it to pass. In vain the might and power of Babylon interposed; the dominion and empire of Babylon fell for ever, even in one hour, because the day for the redemption of Israel was fully come. II. This passage has A SECONDARY FULFILMENT far more glorious and extensive, in the sending forth those who shall preach good tidings of salvation to all the ends of the earth; and the message thus conveyed has an analogy with that proclaimed by the heralds of Cyrus; for it bears to man—fallen and degraded, the captive of sin, fast bound in slavish chains—the tidings of deliverance. The blowing of the trumpet of the Gospel tells of restoration to the forfeited inheritance. It proclaims a full and yet the only mode of deliverance to enslaved man; the only mode of reconciliation with an offended God. The state, then, of the multitude of the heathen should excite our earnest attention, and rouse our warmest sympathies. III. THE MODE WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO APPOINT FOR MAKING THE JOYFUL SOUND KNOWN TO MAN. The preaching of the Word of God by his fellowman. The message must be received by faith. IV. THE CHARACTER OF THE PREACHER SHOULD CORRESPOND WITH HIS MESSAGE, that he should show forth in his life and conversation, that the glorious tidings he was commissioned to convey to others had been received by himself. Pray that the feet of the missionaries in foreign lands may be beautiful in holiness and love. V. THE AUTHORITY ON WHICH THIS PROCLAMATION IS MADE. It was the conqueror of Babylon, the victorious Persian, that gave liberty to the captive Jew; it is the Conqueror of death and hell, the risen and triumphant Saviour, who gave commandment that the Gospel should

be proclaimed to all people. (*C. Caulfield, M.A.*) *The annunciation of peace:*—1. The tidings of the deliverance from Babylon were joyful. But the prophet sees more joyful tidings than these, and a mightier deliverance from a more terrible bondage than even that of Babylon. 2. It is not said, "How lovely are the messengers!" but "How beautiful are their feet!" Not what they are in themselves, but what they bring, as sent from God, and running in obedience to Him, is here presented to the view. 3. Observe how the message is dwelt upon! as if it was so full of everything joyful and good that words fail to express it. It is "good tidings," "peace," "good tidings of good," "salvation." What a mine is there here for him who has eyes to see, a mind to understand, a soul to love, and a heart to overflow with gratitude! 4. Observe how the message ends. It is a glorious note of jubilee. It is a veritable shout of joy. It is a summing up in very deed of the glorious news. It is a pledge of peace and of salvation with which the good news is concluded: "Thy God reigneth." (*R. W. Close, M.A.*) *The peace of the Gospel:*—1. The rich blessing, to which the text refers in such emphatic language, is conveyed in that single, but comprehensive word, "Peace." 2. To whom, then, is the Word of this salvation sent? To whom is the minister of the Gospel commissioned to preach the message of peace? The very mission implies the existence of previous enmity. With whom has God this controversy? Who stand in need of so free an amnesty? Where are the objects of His unmerited grace? 3. Whose heart should not burn within him at the thoughts of his privilege in being employed on such a ministration of love? 4. Let me add one word on the responsibility of those to whom the message of reconciliation is sent. (*C. R. Sumner, D.D.*) *Advent:*—I. THE STATE IMPLIED in the words before us is to be collected from the view of their primary meaning. They originally refer to the Jews captive in Babylon, banished from their country, and deprived of the ordinances of Divine worship, under the displeasure of the Almighty, and oppressed by a haughty and idolatrous enemy. But this is only a faint emblem of that spiritual captivity in which mankind are naturally involved, and from which the Son of God came to deliver us. II. IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS GRACIOUS DISPENSATION DESCRIBED? As the proclamation of good tidings, as the message of reconciliation and peace, as the publication of deliverance and salvation. III. We are now, in some measure, prepared to enter into the spirit of THE EXCLAMATION and to participate in the joyful reception of the message which it announces. Practical remarks: 1. The true nature of the Gospel. It is not, as some would represent it, a mere system of morality. It comprises this, but infinitely more. It contains, first and principally, the offer of pardon to the guilty, of deliverance to the oppressed, of salvation to the lost. 2. If such, however, be the nature of the Gospel, how highly should we value it, and how anxious should we be to profit by it! 3. While we rejoice in the good tidings which have been proclaimed to ourselves, let us pray that the multitudes of our fellow-creatures, to whom they have not yet been announced, may speedily hear the same delightful sound; and may exult in the joyful message of the Gospel, until "all flesh" shall at length "see the salvation of God," and "the whole earth be filled with His glory!" (*Hugh Pearson, D.D.*) *The best news:*—When bad news is abroad, this is good news; and when good news is abroad, this is the best news: that Zion's God reigns. (*M. Henry.*) *The joy of the Christian ministry:*—I. THE MINISTER OF CHRIST IS HELD IN COMMUNION WITH THE GREATEST REALITIES IN THE UNIVERSE. The Hebrew prophets were strenuous men, living in the coils of battle, wrestling with great serpents, struggling up bare cliffs, and giving their lives for the ransom of the people; but we cannot doubt that they were happy men as well, because of the intellectual and spiritual glories in which their lives were set, and their cheering and inspiring comradeship with the wonderful words of God. The "Hymn to the Sun" and the "Sermon to the Birds" of St. Francis of Assisi bear witness to a soul that was enriched, ennobled, purified, simplified, magnified, and made to ripple with gladness and to sing the songs of victory and peace because of perpetual communion with the high and holy thoughts of its heavenly Father. The artist whose soul is seeing visions of the great creations of Raphael and Angelo, the general on the eve of a campaign for the emancipation of a people, the philanthropist pouring out his tears upon the miseries and sins of the world, will sleep on planks and find them soft as down, will eat coarse food and get good blood out of it, and so far forget themselves in their sublime consecrations and so populate with their holiest passions the thought-world and spirit-world within them as to realize Hawthorne's parable of "the Great Stone Face," and grow into the image of the mountain on which their gaze is fixed. So it is with the preacher, and more so. He is surrounded by an imperial guard of

holiest inspirations. II. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS BOUND TO WIN. III. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY HAS THE BULK OF GOOD MEN IN THE WORLD BEHIND IT, CHEERING IT ON. (*W. J. McKittrick, D.D.*) *The missionary theme:*—Dr. Judson when at home on a visit, addressed a large meeting, his theme being "The Preciousness of Christ," and sat down, deeply affected. On his way home a friend said to him, "The people are much disappointed; they wonder you did not talk of something else." "Why, what did they want?" said the missionary. "I presented to the best of my ability the most interesting subject in the world." "But," said the man, "they have heard that before; they wanted something new from a man who has just come from the antipodes." "Then," said the great man, kindling, "I am glad to have it to say that a man from the antipodes had nothing better to tell them than the wondrous story of the dying love of Christ." (*The Wellspring.*)

Vers. 8–12. **Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice.**—*The return from exile:*—From the glowing periods of this paragraph we can reconstruct the picture of the return from exile, as it presented itself to the seer. It was notably the return of the Lord to Zion (ver. 8, R.V.). The stately procession moves slowly and fearlessly. It is not the escape of a band of fugitive slaves, dreading pursuit and recapture: "Ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight." Before it speed the messengers, appearing on the sky-line of the mountains of Zion, with good tidings of good, publishing peace, and publishing salvation. The main body is composed of white-robed priests, bearing with reverent care the holy vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar carried from the temple, which Belshazzar introduced with mockery into his feast, but which Cyrus restored. Their number and weight are carefully specified, 5,400 in all (Ezra i. 7–11). As the procession emerges from its four months of wilderness march on the mountains which were about Jerusalem, her watchmen, who had long waited for the happy moment, lift up their voice; with the voice together do they sing. They see eye to eye. And the waste places of Jerusalem, with their charred wood and scorched stones, break forth into joy and sing together. The valleys and hills become vocal, constituting an orchestra of praise; and the nations of the world are depicted as coming to behold, and acknowledge that the Lord had made bare His holy arm. But they do not see—what is hidden from all but anointed eyes—that the Lord goes before His people, and comes behind as their rearward; so that their difficulties are surmounted by Him before they reach them, and no foe can attack them from behind. The literal fulfilment of this splendid prevision is described in the Book of Ezra. There we find the story of the return of a little band of Jews, 1,700 only in number. They halted at the River Ahava, the last station before they entered the desert, for three days, to put themselves with fasting and prayer into God's hand. They had no experience of desert marching. Their caravan was rendered unwieldy by the number of women and children in it. They had to thread a district infested by wild bands of robbers. But they scorned to ask for an escort of soldiers and horsemen to protect them, so sure were they that their God went before them to open up the way, and came behind to defend against attack. In the midst of the march were priests and Levites, with their sacred charge of which Ezra had said, "Watch and keep them, until ye weigh them in the chambers of the house of the Lord." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Expectation and accomplishment:*—In several respects there seems a falling short between the radiant expectations of the prophet, and the actual accomplishment in the story of Ezra: but we must remember that it is the business of the historian to record the facts, rather than the emotions that coloured them, as the warm colours of the sun colour the hard, grey rocks. And is it not always so, that through our want of faith and obedience we come short of the fulness of blessing which our God has prepared for us? (*Ibid.*) *Eye to eye:*—"Eye to eye do they behold the Lord's return to Zion." "Eye to eye" is face to face with the event. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Eye to eye:*—The expression plainly intimates the clear and satisfying manifestations of the presence and glory of Jehovah to be enjoyed by His servants at the period wherein the foundations of the Messiah's kingdom were to be laid. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Break forth into joy.**—*The return of the Jewish nation:*—I. CONSIDER CERTAIN CHANGES WHICH SHALL HAVE TAKEN PLACE AMONG THE GENTILES OF CHRISTENDOM, AT, OR ABOUT, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JEWISH NATION IN THEIR OWN LAND (Matt. xiii. 24–30). The signal destruction of all false, hypocritical, unbelieving professors of religion, here called "the children of the wicked

one," or "the tares;" and, secondly, the gathering in of the elect members of Christ's mystical body, or the gathering of "the wheat into the barn." II. THE BLESSING WHICH THE JEWISH NATION WILL PROVE TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE EARTH. It appears that the plan and purpose of God, as revealed in His Word, is, after having finished the dispensation of the Gentiles as He finished the dispensation of the Jews, and having "concluded all in unbelief," the period will then arrive when, according to the language of Paul, "He will have mercy upon all." III. THE NATURE AND DURATION OF THIS BLESSING. 1. As to the nature of the blessing. This is nothing more nor less than a true and saving conversion, terminating in salvation. Not a bringing of them back to the state in which Adam was before his fall; not a grafting them into the mystical body of Christ; but a true, a sound conversion from all that is evil, and the full enjoyment of God's great salvation. 2. As to the duration of this blessing. With reference to converted individuals the effect will be eternal: but there will be a limit to this state of things as to the nations of the earth. (*H. McNeile, M.A.*) *Matter for joy and praise:*—Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise. I. GOD'S PEOPLE WILL HAVE THE COMFORT OF THIS SALVATION; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. II. GOD WILL HAVE THE GLORY OF IT (ver. 10). III. ALL THE WORLD WILL HAVE THE BENEFIT OF IT. "All the ends of the earth," etc. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 10. **The Lord hath made bare His holy arm.**—*God's arm made bare:*—When the heroes of old prepared for the fight they put on their armour; but when God prepares for battle He makes bare His arm. Man has to look two ways—to his own defence, as well as to the offence of his enemy; God hath but one direction in which to cast His eye—the overthrow of His foeman; and He disregards all measures of defence, and scorns all armour. He "makes bare" His arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old, who, when he went to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. "Such things as they," said he, "I need not fear; they have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their scimitar." Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of His dignity, and making bare His arm, that He may do His work in earnest, and accomplish His purpose for the establishment of His Church. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The great revival:*—I. THE CAUSE OF A TRUE REVIVAL. The Holy Spirit. While this is the only actual cause, yet there are instrumental causes; and the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus. Added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the Church. II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION. The minister begins to be warmed. The members of the Church grow more serious. Family duties are better attended to; the home circle is brought under better culture. There is an inquirers' meeting held. The revival of the Church then touches the rest of society. III. A CAUTION. "Let all things be done decently, and in order." Distinguish between man and man. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement, and whose conversion will not be genuine. Take care, ye that are officers in the Church, when ye see the people stirred up, that ye exercise still a holy caution, lest the Church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved. IV. With these words of caution, I shall now STIR YOU UP TO SEEK OF GOD A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION throughout the length and breadth of this land. The Lord God hath sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. (*Ibid.*) **All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**—*Tidings of salvation to the ends of the earth:*—I. THE SALVATION OF GOD. "Salvation" carries our meditations direct unto the names and the offices of Him, of whom it hath been said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." And in this connection the whole scheme of mercy and eternal life bursts at once upon our view. 1. It is a great salvation. 2. An everlasting salvation. 3. A complete salvation. 4. A salvation all of God and of grace. II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROMISE, as an encouragement to us to do our duty. If "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," an imperious necessity is laid upon us to favour every opportunity which offers of sending the report of this salvation to all parts of the earth. The truth of the promise, and the certainty

of its accomplishment, might be argued—1. From the Divine purposes taken in connection with the first promise. 2. From the settlement with Abraham respecting the coming of his promised seed. 3. From the style of the prophets, and the expectations which they excite. 4. From the progress of Christianity through the world, in defiance of all the opposition which has been combined against it. (*W. Taylor.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Depart ye.**—*A peremptory, yet encouraging call:*—1. Thus peremptorily were the Jewish exiles called home. Nearly three generations had fled since their fathers had been forcibly settled on the plains of Shinar; but during that period the temporal lot of the Jews had been gradually bettering. Time had healed many wounds, a milder administration had weakened the memory of many sorrows. In "the strange land," strange no longer, homes had been gathered, wealth accumulated, honours won. The land of their fathers was far away, was personally known to few, and lay on the other side of a pathless wilderness. To men so circumstanced, the call to depart was far from welcome. Many ties must be severed if that call were obeyed; many sacrifices made, much travail endured. The present good seemed far better than the future. Besides, who did not know, at least by report, something of the perils of that barren waste over which their march must be made? Who could ensure them, during the progress of that march, against serious harm and loss? Who could demonstrate the certain gain to the majority of exchanging Babylon for Jerusalem, the level land of Shinar for the hill country of Judah? Thus, excuses for remaining sprung readily to their lips; difficulties in obeying the summons grew palpably before their eyes. It was an unwelcome demand, and therefore seemed impossible. 2. But if the prophet's call were peremptory, it was not unsupported by arguments of the weightiest kind. However difficult, the separation must be made, the departure undertaken; but there need be no hurry in their flight, as when Israel went forth from Egypt. The preparation might be deliberate and careful, but one end must be kept steadily in view—return to Palestine. Make all just allowances, meet all just claims, settle all needful matters of business; but still, Prepare to depart. Be ready to leave behind all taint of idolatry. And yet, Take heart, ye fearful ones, and be of good courage. The desert may be trackless, but God shall lead you. The perils of the journey may be numerous, but God shall defend you. The nomadic tribes may harass your hindmost companies, but God shall be your rearward. Such is the interpretation of the original purpose of the prophet's stirring words. (*J. J. Goadby.*) *Spiritual progress:*—Let us take these words as helping to illustrate some of the broader features of spiritual progress. I. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS DEMANDS SEPARATION AND SACRIFICE. What are some of these things from which we must separate ourselves, even at the cost of sacrifice, if spiritual progress is to be made? 1. It is no uncommon thing to find an easy contentment with the truth already attained. The conceit begotten of little knowledge is a fatal bar to progress. The voice of truth may call loudly at our door, "Depart ye; go ye out from thence;" but to heed that voice sacrifice is inevitable. There is no other method of attaining large spiritual advantage than the destruction of our ignorant self-complacency. 2. Spiritual progress largely depends upon the renunciation of the idea of the present perfection of our character. Many would start back at the notion of laying to claim "being already perfect" who virtually live as though it were the first article of their belief. They merely dream over the possibility of improvement. In some cases the error is traceable to the mistakes committed at the very beginning of their spiritual life. Conversion is made "the be-all and the end-all" of their religion. Life seems to travel upward until it reaches that point, and to travel downward ever afterward. 3. But there is another form in which error crops out in older men. For example, when all the inspiration of life is drawn from the past, not with a view of further advancement, but rather as an apology for present repose. "Our best inspiration is not gained from what is behind, but from what is before, and what is above." 4. Still further, no spiritual progress is possible unless we are willing to give up our personal indolence. II. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS TOLERATES NO DELAY BUT THAT WHICH IS SPENT IN PREPARATION. It would have been a strange perversion of the prophet's words if the Jews had regarded the assurance that "they should not go out with haste, neither by flight," as teaching that they were to protract their preparations indefinitely, protract them so as ultimately to relinquish their journey. They rather encourage them, while not neglecting the judicious settlement of their affairs, to make suitable provision for their march across the wilderness. There need be neither bustle nor confusion,

since their exodus will not be either sudden or stealthy. It is Cyrus who reigns, not Pharaoh. But still, it is a journey for which they are to prepare, not a lengthened residence in Babylon. The bearing of all this, as an illustration of spiritual progress, it is not very difficult to see. The delay which is spent in preparation is progress. This may spring, for example, from a careful acquisition of Divine truth. The same thing holds good in regard to character. We cannot force maturity, but we can prepare for it; and all such preparation hastens the desired consummation. Before the Jew reached the land of promise, every stage between Babylon and Jerusalem had to be faithfully traversed. There are stages, also, in the development of character, no one of which can be omitted without subsequent loss. Seasons of suffering of enforced idleness, of dark and apparently irreparable bereavement, are some of the necessary elements out of which real character is born. The time consumed by such discipline is not delay, but progress. All systems, therefore, which attempt to force maturity are as delusive as they are mischievous. Christian work furnishes another illustration of the same general truth. Bracing ourselves up for present duty, and mastering it, is the best qualification for future success. III. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS UNDER DIVINE DIRECTION. "The Lord will go before you." Here was encouragement for the timid Jew. As a general leads his army, and a shepherd his flock, so will Jehovah "go before" the returning exile. Nay more: He shall lead them as a conqueror and a king. But observe more particularly—1. God has a perfect knowledge of our journey. 2. God is ever near. Whatever the stage, and whatever the necessities of the march, He was nigh at hand, even to the ancient Jew. Much closer has He now come to us, He is Immanuel. Here, then, is most powerful stimulus to the flagging Christian. 3. He never leads us where He has not Himself already been. Are we severely tested? "He was tempted in all points like as we are." Are we finding that maturity can only come through travail of soul? "He was made perfect through sufferings." He asks us to undertake no difficult service without first showing us His own obedience. When, therefore, murmurs arise within us, and rebellious feelings agitate and disturb, let this be the sufficient check of them all—"It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master." 4. He is ever before us. We have One in advance of us who knows the possibilities of our nature; and while never overtaxing us, He expects no relaxation of our effort. Let us, therefore, forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those that are before, "looking unto Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of our faith." IV. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS ASSURED OF DIVINE PROTECTION. "The God of Israel shall be your rereward." The "rereward" is the hindmost part of the army, where the reserves are stationed. By this arrangement various important ends are served. For one thing, the stragglers who drop out of the line during a long and toilsome march are effectually gathered up and saved. For another, the army is better prepared to meet unexpected attack by being able rapidly to change its front. "The God of Israel shall be your rereward." Here was the pledge of security for their march across that desert which swarmed, as it swarms now, with scores of robber tribes who have this in common, that they are all equally agile, all equally thirsty for plunder, and all equally unscrupulous. Here, also, lies our truest security in spiritual progress. "The God of Israel is our rereward." 1. There will, therefore, be no surprises which we are not able to meet, no sudden attack from which He will not prove a sufficient Defender. Our sharpest vigilance will not always serve us; and while sweeping the horizon in one direction, our present danger may approach from another. 2. Then protection is afforded against permanent relapse. If we look forward, our Defender is there. If we look backward, behold, He is there. 3. Then there is a reserve of power and of available help which no saint has ever fully tested. (*Ibid.*) *The march through the desert-world to the city of God*:—We may learn some of those qualities which should characterize us in this march. I. THERE SHOULD BE PERPETUAL EXODUS. In all lives there are Babylons, which have no claim on the redeemed of Jehovah. We may have entered them, not without qualms of conscience; but, as time has passed, our reluctance has been overcome. A comradeship has grown up between us and one from whose language and ways we once shrank in horror. An amusement now fascinates us, which we regarded with suspicion and conscientious scruple. A habit of life dominates us from which we once shrank as from infection. A method of winning money now engrosses us; but we can well remember how difficult it was to coax conscience to engage in it. These are Babylons, which cast their fatal spell over the soul, and against which the voice of God urgently protests: "Depart ye, depart ye! go ye out from thence." When stepping out from Babylon to an

unwonted freedom, we naturally shrink back before the desert march, the sandy wastes, the ruined remnants of happier days. But we shall receive more than we renounce. II. IT SHOULD BE WITHOUT HASTE. "Ye shall not go out in haste." There are many English proverbs which sum up the observation of former days and tell how foolish it is to be in a hurry. But, outside of God, there is small chance of obeying these wise maxims. The age is so feverish. No great picture was ever painted in a hurry. No great book was ever written against time. No great discovery was ever granted to the student who could not watch in Nature's antechamber for the gentle opening of her door. The greatest naturalist of our time devoted eight whole years almost entirely to barnacles. Well might John Foster long for the power of touching mankind with the spell of "Be quiet, be quiet." In this our Lord is our best exemplar. This hastelessness was possible to Israel so long as the people believed that God was ordering, preceding, and following their march. III. WE MUST BE AT PEACE ABOUT THE WAY. In early life our path seems clearly defined. We must follow the steps of others, depend on their maxims, act on their advice. It is only when the years grow upon us that this sense of "waylessness," as it has been termed, oppresses us. So the exiles must have felt when they left Ahava and started on the desert march. At such times the lips of Christ answer, "I am the Way." His temper, His way of looking at things, His will, resolves all perplexities. All this was set forth in the figure before us. "The Lord will go before you." When the people came out of Egypt, Jehovah preceded the march in the Shechinah cloud that moved softly above the ark. There was nothing of this sort when Ezra led the first detachment of exiles to Zion; but, though unseen, the Divine Leader was equally in the forefront of the march. Thus it is also in daily experience. Jesus is ever going before us in every call to duty, every prompting to self-sacrifice, every summons to comfort, help and save. IV. WE MUST BE PURE. "Touch no unclean thing. Be ye clean," etc. Those vessels were very precious. The enumeration is made with minute accuracy (Ezra viii. 26). But they were above all things holy unto the Lord. Thus they passed across the desert, holy men bearing the holy vessels. Through this world, unseen by mortal eye, a procession is passing, treading its way across continents of time. It bears holy vessels. Testimony to God's truth, the affirmation of things unseen and eternal, the announcement of the facts of redemption—such are our sacred charge. What manner of persons ought we not to be, to whom so high a ministry is entrusted! Before that procession we are told that waste places would break forth into song. It is a fair conception, as though their feet changed the aspect of the territories through which they passed. What was desert when they came to it, was paradise as they left it! What were ruins, became walls! Where there had been hostility, suspicion and misunderstanding, there came concord and peace, the watchmen seeing eye to eye. This is a true portraiture of the influence of the religion of Jesus over the hearts and lives of men. But let us never forget the importance of prayer, as a necessary link in the achieving of these marvels. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Marching orders:*— We have here, under highly metaphorical forms, the grand ideal of the Christian life. I. We have it set forth as A MARCH OF WARRIOR PRIESTS. Note that phrase, "Ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." The returning exiles as a whole are so addressed, but the significance of the expression, and the precise metaphor which it is meant to convey, may be questionable. The word rendered "vessels" is a wide expression, meaning any kind of equipment, and in other places of the Old Testament the phrase rendered is translated "armour-bearers." Such an image would be quite congruous with the context here, in which warlike figures abound. And if so, the picture would be that of an army on the march, each man carrying some of the weapons of the great Captain and Leader. But perhaps the other explanation is more likely, which regards "the vessels of the Lord" as being an allusion to the sacrificial and other implements of worship, which, in the first Exodus, the Levites carried on the march. And if that be the meaning, then the figure here is that of a company of priests. I venture to throw the two ideas together, and to say that we may here find an ideal of the Christian community as being a great company of warrior priests on the march, guarding a sacred deposit which has been committed to their charge. 1. Look, then, at that combination in the true Christian character of the two apparently opposite ideas of warrior and priest. It suggests that all the life is to be conflict, and that all the conflict is to be worship. It suggests, too, that the warfare is worship, that the office of the priest and of the warrior are one and the same thing, and both consist in their mediating between man and God, bringing God in His Gospel to men, and bringing men through

their faith to God. The combination suggests, likewise, how, in the true Christian character, there ought ever to be blended, in strange harmony, the virtues of the soldier and the qualities of the priest; compassion for the ignorant and them that are out of the way with courage; meekness with strength; a quiet placable heart, hating strife, joined to a spirit that cheerily fronts every danger and is eager for the conflict, in which evil is the foe and God the helper. 2. Note, further, that in this phrase we have the old, old metaphor of life as a march, but so modified as to lose all its melancholy and weariness and to turn into an elevating hope. 3. Again, this metaphor suggests that this company of marching priests have in charge a sacred deposit. Paul speaks of the "glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust." And, in like manner, to us Christians is given the charge of God's great weapons of warfare, with which He contends with the wickedness of the world—viz. that great message of salvation through, and in, the Cross of Jesus Christ. And there are committed to us, further, to guard sedulously, and to keep bright and untarnished and undiminished in weight and worth, the precious treasures of the Christian life of communion with Him. And we may give another application to the figure and think of the solemn trust which is put into our hands, in the gift of our own selves, which we ourselves can either waste, and stain, and lose, or can guard and polish into vessels meet for the Master's use. Gathering, then, these ideas together, we take this as the ideal of the Christian community—a company of priests on the march, with a sacred deposit committed to their trust. II. THE SEPARATION THAT BEFITS THE MARCHING COMPANY. "Depart ye, depart ye! go ye out from thence," etc. In the historical fulfilment of my text, separation from Babylon was the preliminary of the march. Our task is not so simple; our separation from Babylon must be the constant accompaniment of our march. The order in the midst of which we live is not organized on the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom. And wheresoever there are men that seek to order their lives as Christ would have them to be ordered, the first necessity for them is, "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate." This separation will not only be the result of union with Jesus Christ, but it is the condition of all progress in our union with Him. They that are to travel far and fast have to travel light. Many a caravan has broken down in African exploration for no other reason than because it was too well provided with equipments, and so collapsed of its own weight. Therefore, our prophet, in the context, says, "Touch no unclean thing." There is one of the differences between the new Exodus and the old. When Israel came out of Egypt they spoiled the Egyptians, and came away laden with gold and jewels; but it is dangerous work bringing anything away from Babylon with us. Its treasure has to be left if we would march close behind our Lord and Master. We must touch "no unclean thing," because our hands are to be filled with the "vessels of the Lord." It is man's world that we have to leave, but the loftiest sanctity requires no abstention from anything that God has ordained. III. THE PURITY WHICH BECOMES THE BEARERS OF THE VESSELS OF THE LORD. "Be ye clean." The priest's hands must be pure, which figure, being translated, is, transparent purity of conduct and character is demanded from all Christian men who profess to carry God's sacred deposit. You cannot carry it unless your hands are clean, for all the gifts that God gives us glide from our grasp if our hands be stained. Monkish legends tell of sacred pictures and vessels which, when an impure touch was laid upon them, refused to be lifted from the place, and grew there, as rooted, in spite of all efforts to move them. Whosoever seeks to hold the gifts of God in His Gospel in dirty hands will fail miserably in the attempt; and all the joy and peace of communion, the assurance of God's love, and the calm hope of immortal life, will vanish as a soap bubble, grasped by a child, turns into a drop of foul water on its palm, if we try to hold them in foul hands. And, further, remember no priestly service and no successful warfare for Jesus Christ is possible, except on the same condition. One sin, as well as one sinner, destroys much good, and a little inconsistency on the part of us professing Christians neutralizes all the efforts that we may ever try to put forth for Him. IV. THE LEISURELY CONFIDENCE WHICH SHOULD MARK THE MARCH THAT IS GUARDED BY GOD. "Ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight," etc. This is partly an analogy and partly a contrast with the story of the first Exodus. The unusual word translated "with haste" is employed in the Pentateuch to describe the hurry and bustle, not altogether due to the urgency of the Egyptians, but partly also due to the terror of Israel with which that first flight was conducted. And, says my text, in this new coming out of bondage there shall be no need for tremor or perturbation, lending wings to any man's feet; but, with quiet deliberation, like that with which Peter was brought

out of his dungeon, because God knew that He could bring him out safely, the new Exodus shall be carried on. "He that believeth shall not make haste." There is a very good reason why we need not be in any haste due to alarm. For, as in the first Exodus, the guiding pillar led the march, and sometimes, when there were foes behind, as at the Red Sea, shifted its place to the rear, so "the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward." (*A Maclaren, D.D.*) *All the life for God:*—I have seen in a shop window, "The bulk of our goods are of English manufacture." Not the bulk only, but all our life must be given over to God. (*E. F. Marsh.*)

Ver. 12.—**For ye shall not go out with haste.**—*Seemly and unseemly haste:*—They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time nor linger as Lot in Sodom; but they were not to go with a diffident, distrustful haste, as if they were afraid of being pursued, as when they came out of Egypt, or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded. (*M. Henry.*) *The Lord shall go before you:*—No beaten rout of fugitives, but a band of kingly conquerors, robed and crowned, will assemble in heaven. I. THE ESSENTIALLY SYMBOLIC CHARACTER OF THE CAPTIVITIES AND DELIVERANCES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. The history of Israel is the Divine key to the history of man. Through all the confusion of human society, its wars, its movements, its industries, its woes, that history, rightly read, will guide us. There is no crisis, no confusion, no sad experience of society, of which we have not the pattern and the explanation in the Word of God. The history of their captivities is the history of man's captivity. There were two great captivities and two great deliverances. The people were born in the one captivity—it was the dark accident of nature; the other they earned by sin. These represent our natural bondage, and the self-earned serfdom of the soul. There is one Deliverer and one deliverance from both. The method of His deliverance was the same out of both captivities; a glorious manifestation of the might of the redeeming arm of God. But at first sight there is a contrast here as well as a likeness. Taking a superficial view of the Exodus, we should say that they did go out with haste and go forth by flight; and this visible contrast was before the prophet's mind when he wrote the words of our text (Deut. xvi. 3; Ex. xii. 31–39). But from Babylon they went forth in orderly array, with the king's good-will, by his royal command (Ezra i.). Yet under the surface the grand features were identical. In neither case did they steal away. They went because God would have them go; the Angel of His presence guided them, and His shattering judgments were on all who sought to withstand their march to their promised land. If the contrast occurred to the prophet as he wrote the first clause, surely the likeness stands out in the last, "The Lord shall go before you, and the God of Israel shall be your rereward" (Ex. xiii. 21, 22; xiv. 19, 20). II. WE HAVE THE IMAGE HERE OF THE GREAT DELIVERANCE WHICH IS FREELY OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL, wrought for us by His redeeming hand who "rules in righteousness, mighty to save." 1. The reason of our protracted discipline. God will not have us "Go out with haste, nor go forth by flight." I dare say there are few Christians of any earnestness who do not look back to some past season in their experience, and say, Would God that I had then been taken home. The soul was then full of a Divine serenity, with the clear heaven of God's love above it, and a clear assurance that the Rock was beneath it. It seemed to be attuned to heavenly fellowship. But it had been a young and immature deliverance, had God caught you then in the first freshness of your joy and hope to His home in heaven; not by the short, straight way, but by the long, weary, desert path God led His pilgrims; a band of trained veterans they entered at length into Canaan; able to hold it, and to hold to the national unity, through the stormy, struggling ages in which, but for their desert nurture and discipline, they must have been shattered to fragments, and lost to history for ever. It is this experience which at sore cost of pain God is laying up within us. 2. The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward. The Lord has gone before us. It is this which makes our progress a triumph. He has gone before us—(1) In bearing to the uttermost the penalty of sin. (2) In breaking the power of evil (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33). (3) In the way of the wilderness, through life's protracted discipline, to glory (Heb. v. 7–9). And the God of Israel shall be your rereward. He shall gather up the stragglers of the host. This promise seems to run parallel with Isa. xl. 10, 11. It shall be no crush or throng in which the weak ones shall be down-trodden, and the halting left hopelessly in the rear. The Lord has special tenderness for the timid, the trembling, the fainting; He is behind

them to guard them from every pursuing foe. If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, fear not. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) For the Lord will go before you.—*The vanguard and rereward of the Church*:—The Church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. Nevertheless, the Church on earth has, and until the second advent must be, the Church militant, the Church armed, the Church warring, the Church conquering. It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing. How comforting is this text to the believer who recognizes himself as a soldier, and the whole Church as an army! The Church has its vanguard: "Jehovah will go before you." The Church is also in danger behind; enemies may attack her in her hinder part, "and the God of Israel shall be her rereward." I. Consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that a large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of glory; having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future; some portions are as yet uncreated. Now, cast your eyes forward to the front of the great army of God's elect, and you see this great truth coming up with great brilliance before you: "Jehovah shall go before you." Is not this true? Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and the everlasting covenant? Did that not go before the Church? Has Jehovah not gone before His Church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the Church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. Why need I go through all the pages of the history of the Church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Hath it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? How can ye account for the glorious triumphs of the Church if ye deny the fact that God has gone before her? God had gone beforehand with his Church, and provided stores of grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. "And the God of Israel shall be the rereward." The original Hebrew is, "God of Israel shall gather you up." Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert, and others of whom are overcome by fatigue; but the army of God is "gathered up;" none desert from it if they be real soldiers of the Cross, and none drop down upon the road. The Church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing the onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the Church concerning something that has either been taught, or revealed, or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rereward. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infidels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the Gospel. If they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah Himself. But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the Church may represent the rereward. There are to come, perhaps, to the Church, fiercer persecutions than she has ever known. But however fierce those troubles shall be, God, who has gone before His Church in olden times, will gather up the rear, and she who has been *Ecclesia victrix*—the Church, the conqueror, will still be the same, and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the Church triumphant, even as already glorified. Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rereward, shall gather up His people? II. AS IT RESPECTS US, AS INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS. Two troubles present themselves, the future and the past. Remember, you are not a child of chance. 1. Stop and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way. (1) God has gone before you in the decree of His predestination. (2) In the actual preparations of His providence. (3) In the incarnation of Christ. As to our future troubles Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, He "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." As for trials and sorrows, He has felt all we can possibly feel, and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trodden the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. (4) There is this reflection also, that, inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, He has done something in that going before, for He has conquered every foe that lies in his way. 2. I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me; it is the past—what I have done and what I have not done—the years that are gone—how I have sinned, and how I have not served my Master as I ought." The God of Israel shall be your rereward. Notice the different titles. The first is "Jehovah"—"Jehovah will go before you." That is the I AM, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of

the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the I AM, the omnipotent, that we require Him. Let me always think, that I have God behind me as well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God our Guard and Guide:*—I. THE GOOD MAN'S PATH IS BESET WITH PERIL. 1. There are perils that come up from behind. The deadliest foes are those that attack us in the rear. The traveller may be overtaken by pestilence and death, that lay all unsuspected in the very places he passed in laughter and in song. Man never gets away from his past. (1) Perils come upon us from the mistakes of the past. Mistakes may be innocent enough, but unfortunately for us, Nature punishes blunders as though they were crimes. Fire burns just the same, whether it be kindled innocently or of malice. Water drowns irrespective of the way people get in. Accident or crime, it is all the same to Nature. An indiscretion may ruin your health, bring your business to the dust, and wreck the peace of your home, just as surely as deliberate sin. Sheer inexperience is responsible for many a disaster. And every blunder of to-day sends forward an enemy to imperil the life of to-morrow. Further complications arise from the fact that much of our life is bound up with the lives of others. The follies as well as the sins of the fathers are visited to the third or fourth generation. (2) Perils come upon us from the sins of the past. "It's the eleventh commandment I'm most afraid of," hiccoughed a drunken man to an evangelist one day. "And what is that?" asked the seeker of souls. "Be sure your sin will find you out." And if sheer mistakes survive and pursue, how much more our sins. There is no greater delusion than to imagine that sin can be committed, covered up, forgotten, and done with. Sin breeds. And its progeny slays the transgressor. The sowing of wild oats is followed by the inevitable harvest. An evil deed once done can never be undone: not even by the grace of God. And in it there may lurk an enemy that years after may rise up and strike his deadly weapon in your back. Old age may find you full of the sins of your youth. Sins long left behind may live on in your memory. Man never forgets. A chance word, an unconscious look, an innocent gesture may strike a slumbering chord, and the whole scene lives as vividly as ever. Neither remorse nor repentance can blot out the horrid thing from before your eyes. It will startle you in the very holy of holies, and disturb your very communion with God. If unpardoned it will fill your old age with terror, and your dying moments with the horrors of hell. The most terrible temptations lurk in the memory of past transgression, even after the sin is forsaken and forgiven. I have known a saint turned eighty lament with tears that, while he was forgetting the hymns which had been his delight for sixty years, the lewd songs of his teens came back upon him with overwhelming vividness and force. He couldn't pray, but some rollicking, filthy chorus would insist on being sung. It is from behind that the devil strikes home, and strikes hard. Look at the consequences of sin if you would realize the terrible forces that come up from behind. The devil persuaded you there would be no consequences. It was a passing pleasure. You were all right in the morning, and thought it was all over. It is never over. That was only the beginning. Drink, gambling, lust, passion, and greed, have followed stealthily for years, and sprung upon men unawares. The terrible results of sin may pursue you in your body. A man who never but once went into the house of the woman of whom Solomon says such terrible things, for nearly half a century went through the world crooked and in pain. The most awful thing I know that can come to a man out of his past, is to see his own sin working ruin in the soul of another. What a host follows hard after us! All the way is crowded with malignant and vicious enemies that seek to destroy us. And nearly all, if not every one of them, our own creation. They are the offspring of our folly, our sin, our shame. 2. There are perils ahead. Happily no man can see very far ahead. II. THE GOOD MAN'S PATH IS ALSO BESET WITH GOD. The Lord is in the rear to protect, and in the van to guide. 1. God stands between us and our past. (1) To forgive its sin. (2) To cut off our retreat. The old Egyptian life had a strange fascination over the delivered people. The backsliding tendency is in us all. But the Rearguard is between us and Egypt. He will prevent our retreat, and by a sharp command urge us forward to the land of grapes. We need to be saved from ourselves, and He will so completely deliver us that the last longing for Egypt shall die, and all our desire shall be for the Canaan of perfect love. (3) To defend against its assaults. Our worst enemies are at our backs, where we are most helpless. The devil strikes from behind. But be not afraid, God is in the rear. (4) To make our enemies His slaves. The forces of hell as well as the hosts of heaven are under His control. 2. God goes before

us in all the way of the future. We don't know the way, but He does—every inch of it. For he prepared and appointed it. And more than that. He has trodden and tested it before our feet touch it. He knows. That is enough. He leads. I follow. We tread the same path. We share the same road. Why should I fear? He goes before us in all our service for Him. Philip found the eunuch already prepared for his message. And Ananias found Saul waiting to receive his ministrations. So as we go to our service we shall find the Lord has been there before us preparing our way. The Divine movement is always forward. God is behind, but He never turns back. He goes before, and the whole host moves forward. Our only safety is in progress. (*S. Chadwick.*)

Vers. 13–15.—**Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently.**—*The humiliation and exaltation of Christ:*—I. THE STATE OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION. "As many were astonied at Thee," etc. 1. Consider His outward or bodily sufferings. 2. His inward sorrows, the agonies of His mind, have no parallel. II. OUR SAVIOUR'S EXALTATION. "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently," etc. The exaltation of Christ may be considered under four particulars. 1. His resurrection from the dead. 2. His ascension into heaven. 3. His glorification at the Father's right hand. 4. His coming again to judgment. Practical improvement: 1. What hath been said on the subject of the Redeemer's sufferings, should excite all our gratitude and love to Him, who readily entered upon, and went through, all this scene of sorrow for our sake. 2. Let this excite us to greater zeal and diligence in His service; as the best expression of our gratitude and love. 3. The consideration of Christ's love and sufferings for us should inspire us with the firmest fortitude and fidelity, in defending His cause and the honour of His Gospel against all opposition, and in suffering for it. 4. Under every affliction of life let us turn our eyes to our suffering Redeemer, as a perfect pattern of patience. 5. Let us triumph in the faith and views of a triumphant Saviour. (*A. Mason, M.A.*) *The sure triumph of the crucified One:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR LORD'S DEALINGS. He is called "My Servant," a title as honourable as it is condescending, and it is said that He deals prudently. He who took upon Him the form of a servant acts as a wise servant in everything; and indeed it could not be otherwise, for "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." 1. This prudence was manifest in the days of His flesh, from His childhood among the doctors in the temple on to His confession before Pontius Pilate. Our Lord was enthusiastic; but that enthusiasm never carried Him into rashness. Our Saviour was full of love, and that love made Him frank and open-hearted; but for all that He was ever prudent, and "committed Himself unto no man, for He knew what was in man." Too many who aspire to be leaders of the people study policy, craft and diplomacy. The Friend of sinners had not a fraction of that about Him; and yet He was wiser than if diplomacy had been His study from His youth up. 2. He who on earth became obedient unto death has now gone into the glory, but He is still over the house of God, conducting its affairs. He deals prudently still. Our fears lead us to judge that the affairs of Christ's kingdom are going amiss, but we may rest assured that all is well, for the Lord hath put all things under the feet of Jesus. All along through the history of the Church the dealings of the Lord Jesus with His people have been very remarkable. The wisdom in them is often deep, and only discoverable by those who seek it out, and yet frequently it sparkles upon the surface like gold in certain lands across the sea. Note how the Lord has made His Church learn truth by degrees, and purified her first of one error and then of another. The wise physician tolerates disease until it shall have reached the point at which he can grapple with it, so as to eradicate it from the system, so has the good Lord allowed some ills to fester in the midst of His Church, that He may ultimately exterminate them. Study the pages of ecclesiastical history, and you will see how Jesus Christ has dealt wisely in the raising up of fitting men for all times. I could not suppose a better man for Luther's age than Luther, yet Luther alone would have been very incomplete for the full service needed had it not been for Calvin, whose calm intellect was the complement of Luther's fiery soul. 3. Another translation of the passage is, "My Servant shall have prosperous success." Let us append that meaning to the other. Prosperity will grow out of our Lord's prudent dealings. 4. In consequence of this the Lord shall be exalted and extolled. II. THE STUMBLING-BLOCK IN THE WAY OF OUR LORD. It is His Cross, which to Jew and Greek is ever a hindrance. As if the prophet saw Him in vision, he cries out, "As many were astonied at Thee," etc. 1. He has risen from the grave and gone into His glory, but the offence

of the Cross has not ceased, for upon His Gospel there remains the image of His marred visage, and therefore men despise it. The preaching of the Cross is foolishness to many. 2. The practical part of the Gospel is equally a stumbling-block to ungodly men, for when men inquire what they must do to be saved, they are told that they must receive the Gospel as little children, that they must repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Very humbling precepts for human self-sufficiency! And after they are saved, if they inquire what they should do, the precepts are not those which commend themselves to proud human nature—for they are such as these—"Be ye kindly affectioned one to another," "forbearing one another and forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." To the world which loves conquerors, and blasts of trumpets, and chaplets of laurel, this kind of teaching has a marred visage, and an uncomely form. 3. Then, what seems even more humbling, the Lord Jesus Christ in His prudent dealing sends this Gospel among us by men who are neither great nor noble, nor even among the wise of this world. 4. Worse still, if worse can be, the people who become converted and follow the Saviour are generally of the poorer sort, and lightly esteemed. III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE REMOVAL OF THIS STUMBLING-BLOCK and the spread of Christ's kingdom. As His face was marred, so surely "shall He sprinkle many nations;" by which we understand, first, that the doctrines of the Gospel are to fall in a copious shower over all lands. This sprinkling we must interpret according to the Mosaic ceremonies. There was a sprinkling with blood, to set forth pardon of sin, and a sprinkling with water to set forth purification from the power of sin. The influence of His grace and the power of His work shall be extended not over the common people only, but over their leaders and rulers. "The kings shall shut their mouths at Him;" they shall have no word to say against Him; they shall be so subdued by the majesty of His power that they shall silently pay Him reverence, and prostrate themselves before His throne. IV. THE MANNER OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. How will it come to pass? Will there be a new machinery? Will the world be converted, and the kings be made to shut their mouths by some new mode of operation? I do not think so. Will the saints take the sword one day? No, the way which has been from the beginning of the dispensation will last to its close. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 1. According to this passage, these kings and nations are first of all to hear. "Faith coming by hearing." If they are to hear, we must preach and teach, so that our clear line of duty is to go on spreading the Gospel. 2. These people appear not only to have heard, but to have seen. "That which had not been told them shall they see." This seeing is not with their bodily eyes but by the perceptions of their minds. Faith comes by the soul perceiving what the Gospel means. 3. After they had seen, it appears from the text that they considered. "That which they had not heard shall they consider." This is how men are saved: they hear the Gospel, they catch the meaning of it, and then they consider it. When they had seen and considered silently, they accepted the Lord as their Lord, for they shut their mouths at Him; they ceased from all opposition; they quietly resigned their wills, and paid allegiance to the great King of kings. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The character and work of the Messiah:*—I. THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO THE WORLD, BY THE MYSTERIOUS SUFFERINGS OF ITS DIVINE FOUNDER. "Behold, My Servant!" The "astonishment of many" evidently refers to the inconsistency apparent between the high pretensions and the depressed condition of this Servant of God. In truth, the plan of Christianity, with its introduction into the world, is far above the calculations of human sagacity. II. THE DECLARATION OF THE PROPHET WITH REGARD TO THE UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST ON THE EARTH. "My Servant shall deal prudently. He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high." 1. The expression, "He shall deal prudently," is, in the margin, translated, "He shall prosper;" and thus the whole clause is declarative of the same truth—the triumph and success of the Son of God. If many were astonished at His humiliation, a far greater number shall be astonished at His exaltation. 2. This grand and glorious achievement He effected by means that came not within the range of mortal discernment. It was by death that He conquered death. It was by a perfect obedience in action and in suffering, that He became the second Adam—the spiritual Head of a new and happier race. He planted His religion in the earth, opposed by hostile scorn and relentless malice and despotic power. The cause of Christ achieved its victories by its own inherent power. Its adherents were, indeed, strong; but it was in faith, and purity, and charity. Thus the Servant of God prospered, and was extolled, and became very

high. 3. But His reign on the earth is yet very limited, and His conquests incomplete. III. WHAT WE MAY GATHER FROM THIS PROPHETIC ACCOUNT RESPECTING THE PROCESS BY WHICH THE KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH SHALL THUS BE FULLY AND FINALLY ESTABLISHED. "As many were astonied at Thee: so shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings," etc. We are led to infer—1. That there shall be a wide dispersion of Divine knowledge over heathen and Mohammedan nations; for men cannot see or consider that which is not first presented to their notice. 2. The nations shall fix their anxious attention on the truths declared to them. 3. Impressed with holy awe, they shall assume the attitude of abasement and submission. I apprehend that the expression, the "kings shall shut their mouths at Him," implies the submission of whole nations, here represented by kings; for, as the reception of Christianity on the part of the rulers of a country requires the overthrow of every system of religious polity previously established, such a reception publicly made, implies, more or less, the submission of the mass of the people. 4. He shall forgive their iniquities and sanctify their hearts. "He shall sprinkle many nations;" that is, in allusion to the aspersions under the law, by which the people were sanctified, the Son of God shall apply to the souls of regenerated multitudes the blood of His great atonement, and the sacred influences of His Holy Spirit. Then, "a nation shall be born in a day." (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*) *A threefold view of the Person and work of Jesus Christ:*—I. HIS WORK BELOW. He is called the "Servant" of the Lord. "As many were astonied at Thee," etc. The disciples saw Him on the Cross; they gazed on Him with amazement, and scarcely recovered themselves by the third day. The women who followed Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, stood afar off, and smote their breasts as they killed Him; and the thousands of men whom He had healed and cured, looked with astonishment at the ignominious termination of such a life. Even the elements seemed to join in the universal consternation; the sun refused to shine, and hid himself in darkness; the light of the moon was clouded. II. THINK OF HIM SITTING IN GLORY UPON HIS THRONE. "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." 1. He shall be exalted. This relates to His authority and power. Verily, a name is written in His vesture and on His thigh, and that name is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 2. He shall be extolled. It has been the delight of every apostle, of every evangelist, of every missionary, of every minister, of every Christian, to extol Him; and when we have done our best, it is our grief and shame and humility that we cannot extol Him more. 3. "He shall be very high," or, if you prefer the language of the apostle, "In all things He shall have the pre-eminence." III. The works of mercy which the Saviour is accomplishing IN HIS EXALTED STATE. He sets forth His Gospel according to His promise. "He shall sprinkle many nations." This denotes the office of Christ. "The kings shall stop their mouths at Him." This text is best explained by quoting a passage in which Job, speaking of himself as the chief magistrate, says, "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street! the young men saw me," etc. (Job xxix. 7–10). Such was the respect for the dignity of this man of God, that in his presence the nobles and the elders spake not, but imposed silence on their lips; so shall it be with the potentates and monarchs of the earth in the presence of Him "who is greater than all." (*J. Stratten.*) *The face of Christ:*—Our Lord Jesus Christ bore from of old the name of "Wonderful," and the word seems all too poor to set forth His marvellous person and character. It is an astonishing thing that there should have been a Christ at all; the Incarnation is the miracle of miracles; that He who is the Infinite should become an infant. I. HE WAS A GREAT WONDER IN HIS GRIEFS. II. HE WAS A GREAT WONDER IN HIS GLORY. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.**—*The Saviour's exaltation:*—We obtain the following series of thoughts, "He will rise, He will be still more exalted, He will stand high." The three verbs thus signify beginning, progress and result, or the climax of the exaltation. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **As many were astonied at Thee.**—*The abasement of Christ and its consequences:*—I. THE UNEQUALLED ABASEMENT AND SORROW OF THE MESSIAH. Unequalled—1. Because of the previous dignity from which He descended. 2. If we trace the various stages of His humiliation. Was He born? It was of no opulent parents. As He grew up he became the object of envy. When He sprang into youth, it was not to sway a sceptre or to govern millions, but to work with His reputed father. **As He went on in His course He was exposed to the scoffs and**

malice of Jews and Gentiles, etc. Eye the Saviour's sufferings in what light you please, and you will find His sufferings were various as well as intense. He suffered as a man; from want—from fatigue—from poverty—from the crown of thorns placed on His head, etc. He suffered civilly, as a member of society. An insurrectionist and a murderer was preferred before Him. He suffered spiritually—from the thick volleys of fiery darts which were showered at Him, and from the hidings of His Father's countenance. And observe the associations which were likely to aggravate His sufferings. "They all forsook Him and fled." 3. Our Saviour's sufferings and woes derived additional poignancy and exquisiteness from the very character which He bare. "Many were astonied at Thee." The spectators were so, who smote upon their breasts, and returned, after having seen these things. Devils were astonished, when they saw how all the shafts of their malice recoiled. Angels were astonished as they ministered unto Him. So He is still a wonder unto many; and if He be not so to us, it is because of our criminal insensibility and indifference. II. THE MOMENTOUS CONSEQUENCES BY WHICH HIS SUFFERINGS AND SORROWS WERE TO BE FOLLOWED. "So shall He sprinkle many nations." There is a direct reference to the various aspersions and ablutions under the law of Moses. These were of three kinds—1. An aspersion of the blood of atonement once a year. 2. An aspersion of water on the unclean person, called the water of separation, by which a person was separated to a holy purpose. 3. An aspersion both of water and of blood on the leper, by which he was pronounced clean, and needed no longer to remain without the camp. Combine these ideas, and they will give the two grand designs of our Saviour's death—a propitiation, and a purification. And recollect that these two great and important ends of our Saviour's death must always be associated. Here we see their superiority over the legal aspersions. (*J. Clayton, M.A.*) *A twofold wonder:*— I. THE ASTONISHMENT PRODUCED BY OUR SAVIOUR'S HUMILIATION. 1. "Many were astonied at Thee"—astonished, doubtless, at the disappointment of their expectations. They had looked for a second Joshua, who should march at their head, and lead them forth from victory to victory till all their enemies should have fallen beneath their feet. They had expected another son of Jesse, who should make the name of Israel terrible to surrounding nations. And when they saw the world's Redeemer, and found Him possessed of none of those external attributes which they deemed essential to His character, they were offended at Him, and their astonishment was that of indignation and bitter disappointment. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" 2. But our text goes on to describe some special causes of this astonishment. "His visage was so marred, more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Whilst further on the prophet adds, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." I do not believe that such expressions as these are intended to represent the person of the Saviour as naturally defective in comeliness or dignity, though they have been oftentimes so understood, for we may reasonably conclude that the form which God gave His own Son was one of the best and the most perfect, and that the features of His countenance were as expressive as human features could be of intelligence, of dignity, and of love. Yet there was a marvellous mixture of meekness with this intelligence, of abasement with this dignity, and of sorrow with this love. Never was there a countenance which so beamed with holiness; yet never was there one so deeply furrowed with the lines the curse had made. Unrepenting sinners, like the Jews of old, are to this day astonished without being benefited at the sight of the Redeemer's sufferings. II. The text says, alluding to the ceremonial law, "He shall sprinkle many nations," etc. We here perceive THE DIFFERENCE OF EFFECT produced by that astonishment which flows from contempt, and that which is produced by reverential regard for an object of infinite worth and dignity. The first opens the lips, and the latter seals them. The first accumulates epithets of scorn. But very different shall be the result of that wonder which shall fill the breast when the Saviour begins to give convincing proof of the greatness and universality of His triumph. "Kings shall then shut their mouths at Him." "Seeing the progress of His kingdom," says Vitringa, "they shall revoke their edicts against it, and thus shut their mouths at Him." The wonder shall then become too great for expression. Again, "That which had not been told them shall they see." The general ignorance which prevails amongst men, even the most noble and the most educated, on religious subjects, is oftentimes most astounding. To cleanse the heart, to sanctify the soul, there is no power but of God; and so, whenever a sinner is converted from the error of his ways, he is brought to acknowledge, "this is the Lord's doing." But the true accomplishment of the prediction before us requires greater things than these. There shall be

a time when high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, shall all stand in amazement at the triumphs of the Cross of Christ. "What they had not heard shall they consider." They shall lay to heart those things which shall arrest their attention. It will not be enough for them to be mere spectators of the Saviour's triumph; they shall become deeply interested in it; all their thoughts, affections, efforts, shall tend towards it. (*S. Bridge, M.A.*) *Christ's endurance and success:*—I. THE SAVIOUR'S ENDURANCE. II. THE SAVIOUR'S SUCCESS. (*Ibid.*) **His visage was so marred more than any man.**—*The marred face:*—I. CHRIST'S FACE BEING SO BEAUTIFUL WAS EASILY MARRED. The perfect beauty of God was the reflected loveliness of Christ. Perfection is easily blemished; the more beautiful anything is, the more easily it is injured. II. CHRIST'S FACE WAS AN INDEX OF HIS LIFE AND WORK. His face told the story of His inner life. This was the chief reason for the loveliness of Jesus' face. His heart was full of pure, white thoughts, and consequently rays of beauty shot out through His gentle eyes. There burned within Him the light of tranquillity, which found expression in His calm, peaceful countenance. All the grandest virtues of this life could be seen in Jesus' face. And yet this beauty was marred, the light from His inner light suffered a black eclipse. His face was also an index of His work. When you see a man in the street you can often tell whether he is student, artist or working-man. The employment makes a certain impression upon the face. Christ's employment must have told upon His countenance. In His compassion for souls "He sighed deeply in spirit," "He groaned and was troubled." Words such as these convey some idea of the wear and tear Jesus had to endure. III. THERE ARE SPECIAL INSTANCES GIVEN OF THE MARRING OF HIS FACE. At the grave of Lazarus, when the sisters were lamenting for their dead brother, Christ joined in the sorrow and wept, His face being stained with tears. On the brow of Olivet as He stood looking at the beloved city He began to weep, and in the garden of Gethsemane as the sweat dropped from Him in drops like blood, He fell on His face and prayed; in the judgment-hall when standing in the presence of His accusers, we read, "And some began to spit on Him and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy, and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands." They degraded Jesus as much as possible, directing their blows and insults to His face; such treatment would tell heavily upon His appearance. IV. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING ATTRACTIVE IN THE FACE OF JESUS. The average man could see no beauty in Jesus; still, the children were attracted by Him, and children as a rule are either repelled or won by a look. It was by a look that Jesus won Peter from a state of backsliding. In conclusion, we like to think of God as having a face the same as that of Jesus. Scientists talk of "an essence," "a great first cause," "something in the abstract," but with such definitions we wander and cannot understand God. By faith, as Dr. Saphir says, "we see the face of our dear God and seek Him as a friend" or, like one of old, we say, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." We look forward to one day seeing the face of Jesus. (*W. K. Bryce.*)

Ver. 15. **So shall He sprinkle many nations.**—*Sprinkling the nations:*—"Sprinkle;" possibly "startle," cause to rise up in wonder and reverence. The nations were familiar with the afflictions and abjectness of the Servant; suddenly, and without intimation of it, they see His elevation and stand up in reverential silence before Him. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *The peculiar doctrines of Christianity the subject of ancient prophecy:*—I. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROPHECY IN GENERAL. This prophecy hath been in part already accomplished, in the diffusive spread of the Gospel throughout the world: many nations whereof have been plentifully sprinkled with its Divine doctrines, and made nominal Christians; and many individuals in those nations been made real converts, by virtue of that "blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." II. SOME OF THOSE PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY WHICH WE MAY SUPPOSE TO BE HERE REFERRED TO, most of which were in a great measure, and some of them altogether, unknown to the world, before the Messiah came. 1. The doctrine of man's apostacy, and the way wherein moral evil made its first entrance into the world. 2. The method of man's recovery from the miseries of his apostate state, by the mediation and redemption of Christ. 3. The renovation of our natures by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. 4. The doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity. 5. The incarnation of the Son of God. 6. The doctrine of grace. 7. The gracious and effectual operations of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man. 8. The resurrection of the body. 9. Several particular circumstances relating to the final

judgment are the peculiar discoveries of the Christian revelation, that Christ will be the Judge, etc. 10. The undoubted certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments. (*A. Mason, M.A.*) *The risen Christ winning the nations*:—Bishop George Augustus Selwyn was a splendid type of the muscular Christian. As a missionary he was a mighty force, and as a friend he was universally beloved. An incident in his career as Missionary Bishop of New Zealand well shows what manner of man he was. Governor Grey and Bishop Selwyn were out together on a walking expedition, and it was Easter Sunday. "Christ has risen!" Selwyn reverently welcomed the day, and his companion joined, "He has risen indeed!" They were communing in that spirit when a bundle of letters was brought into the tent. One to Selwyn bore the news of the death of Siapo, a Loyalty Islander, who had become a Christian under his teaching, and who was being educated with other natives at his seminary in Auckland. The Bishop, overcome with grief, burst into tears; then he broke some moments of silence with the words, "Why, you have not shed a single tear!" "No," said the Governor, "I have been so wrapped in thought that I could not weep. I have been thinking of the prophecy that men of every race were to be assembled in the kingdom of heaven. I have tried to imagine the wonder and joy prevailing there at the coming of Siapo, the first Christian of his race. He would be glad evidence that another people of the world had been added to the teaching of Christ." "Yes, yes," said Selwyn, drying his tears, "that is the true idea to entertain, and I shall not weep any more." (*Christian Age.*) **The kings shall shut their mouths at Him.**—*The wondrous monarchy*:—I. THE UNIQUE SPECTACLE WHICH CHRIST PRESENTS. All that is great in this spectacle gathers round what this Servant is to be and do. We observe five distinguishing features—1. Wondrous wisdom. "My Servant shall deal prudently." Jesus was filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding; with a keen and piercing glance He saw men through and through. But it was not only in confounding His enemies that His superhuman wisdom was shown; it was also in the means He used for establishing that kingdom which He came to found. Means on which the world would have relied He forbade and abjured. Means never tried before were the only ones He would use. He would have no sword employed either to defend Himself, or to extend His sway, but equipped His warriors only with "power from on high"! 2. Wondrous sorrow (ver. 14). He was "a man of sorrows." 3. Wondrous elevation. "He shall arise, and be lifted up, and be glorified exceedingly." These words exactly indicate the resurrection, the ascension and the exaltation to mediatorial glory. 4. Wondrous redeeming efficacy. "So shall He sprinkle many nations." As His sorrow was intense, so shall His redeeming power be large, as if the one were a recompense for the other. There were (among others) two kinds of sprinkling enjoined by the Mosaic law, to either or to both of which a reference may be intended here. The sprinkling of blood, being towards and on the mercy-seat, was God-wards; the sprinkling of water, as on the Levite or leper, was on the person, man-wards. So the work of Christ has this double aspect. The blood-shedding was God's own atoning act in Him, for us; the cleansing grace is God's purifying act, through Him, in us. 5. Wondrous uniting power. "So shall He sprinkle many nations." He would absolve and sanctify, not the Jew only, but also the Greek, "and thus abolish the wall of partition between Israel and the heathen, and gather into one holy Church with Israel, those who had hitherto been pronounced unclean." How vividly is the fulfilment of this portrayed in Acts x. II. WHAT IS THERE HERE THAT SHOULD LEAD KINGS, IN PARTICULAR, TO DO THIS? Is it that though kings and princes know all that earth has to give of luxury and splendour, they see here a pomp that outshines all beside? That may be so, but we think the reason lies deeper still. It is evidently on account of something before unknown that they are to "shut their mouths," for the text goes on to say, "That which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Around what do the thoughts and associations of kings gather? Do they not gather round the sceptre, crown and empire? Do they not naturally weigh in the balance one monarchy against another? Surely. Well, here is such a monarchy as earth had never known before, and one that will ever stand absolutely alone. 1. In this monarchy alone right and might are entirely equal. 2. This monarchy is based on the King's own self-sacrifice. 3. How did He set up this kingdom? A few poor fishermen undertook to instruct and convert the world. The success was prodigious. 4. This monarchy was based on the King's own priesthood. 5. The power of love is the only power that gathers men round the Cross. 6. This monarchy was inaugurated by the issue

of a royal pardon offered to the worst of sinners, "beginning at Jerusalem." 7. This is a monarchy that, uniting men under its sceptre, creating a new power of love towards itself, creates also a new power of love for man towards man, as well as of man for Jesus; and, strange as it may seem, in gathering men of every tribe and tongue under its sceptre, it makes them forget their diversity, and brings them to feel their oneness in one common God and Father; and by the pulse-beat of a common life in all the nations, solves the long-vexed problem of the unity of the human race! Nor is this all. 8. Everywhere the one force which holds together the subjects of this Monarch is love!—not fear, not constraint, but love. Is there nothing in such a monarchy as this to give a clue to the meaning of the expression, "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him"? The expression evidently denotes the effect which the report or the sight of such a monarchy should produce upon them. Some take it as meaning that they should shut their mouths in silent fear. Others, that they should withdraw the edicts against Christianity. We rather, with Mr. Urwick, take it as indicating "the awe-inspiring power" of Christ. There may be yet a deeper meaning in the expression, "shall shut their mouths"—a meaning which applies only to Christian kings, and not to them simply as kings, but rather as Christians in common with others. The words may indicate the silence induced by deep emotion. (*J. Culross, D.D.*)

CHAPTER LIII.

VERS. 1–12. Who hath believed our report?—*The Messiah referred to in Isaiah liii.*:—By some it has been supposed, in ancient times and in modern, that the prophet was referring to the sufferings of the nation of Israel—either of Israel as a whole or of the righteous section of the nation—and to the benefits that would accrue from those sufferings to the surrounding peoples, some of whom were contemptuous of Israel, all of whom may be described as ignorant of God. But to defend that opinion it is necessary to paraphrase and interpret some of the statements in a way that no sound rules of exposition will allow. Even Jewish historians are wont to represent the sufferings of their people as the consequence of sin, whereas these verses speak repeatedly of sufferings that are vicarious. St. Paul says in one place that the fall of the Jews "is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles;" but he is so far from meaning that the Jews suffered in the stead of the Gentiles, that he proceeds at once to argue by implication: If the world has been blessed notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of the Jew, how much more would it have been blessed if Israel had been true? It is quite possible that the great figure of "the Servant of Jehovah," standing in the front of all these verses, was designed to have more than a single interpretation, to be reverently approached from many sides, to be full of appeals to the patriotism and to the piety of the Israelite; but at the same time it is no mere abstract conception, but the figure of a living and separated Person, "more perfect than human believer ever was, uniting in himself more richly than any other messenger of God everything that was necessary for the salvation of man, and finally accomplishing what no mere prophet" ever attempted. And some of the authorities of the synagogue even might be quoted in favour of the almost universal Christian opinion, that the Man of Sorrows of this chapter despised, and yet triumphant, is no other than the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world, who over-trod the lowest levels of human pain and misery, and who hereafter will sit enthroned, on His head many crowns, and in His heart the satisfaction of assured and unlimited victory. (*R. W. Moss, D.D.*) *The Jewish nation a vicarious sufferer*:—Isaiah liii. has been supposed by many to refer to the Jewish nation as a whole, and not to Christ or any other individual. And, in truth, it is in many ways singularly applicable to Israel as a nation. As a nation Israel was "despised and rejected," and "bore the sins of many." This people was the chief medium through which the Eternal was made manifest on earth. Hence came the peculiarities and deficiencies of the Hebrew nature. The Jews were haunted by the Infinite and Eternal; and therefore they knew not the free and careless joyousness of Greece. The mountains are scarred and rent by storms and tempests almost unknown in the valleys. The deepest religion necessarily involves prolonged suffering. The near

presence of the Infinite pierces and wounds the soul. To Greeks or Romans Israel was a sort of Moses, veiling even while revealing the terrific lineaments of Jehovah. The face of Israel did indeed shine with an unearthly glory after communing with God on the mountain; but it was a glory utterly uncongenial to the gaiety of joyous Athens. Most truly might Greeks and Romans say of the devout Jew, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Yet was Israel a mighty benefactor to the human race. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Salvation came by the Jews. They had more genuine moral inspiration than any others of the sons of men. To them alone was clearly disclosed the true Jacob's ladder connecting earth with heaven. To the Greeks the Infinite was a mere notion, a thing for the intellect to play with, or a kind of irreducible surd left after the keenest philosophical analysis. To the Hebrews, on the other hand, the Infinite was an appalling and soul-abasing reality, an ever-menacing guide, as the fiery flaming sword of the cherubims "which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." "It pleased the Lord to bruise" Israel for the sake of the whole world. By being "numbered with the transgressors," Israel found out the real righteousness. (*A. Crauford, M.A.*) *The Jewish nation was a type of Christ*, and of all natures at once spiritual and sympathetic throughout the ages. All real prophets in every age have in them much of the true Hebrew nature, with its depths and its limitations. (*Ibid.*) *The servant and Israel:*—"Who believed what we heard, and to whom did the arm of the Lord reveal itself?" Who believed the revelation given to us in regard to the Servant, and who perceived the operation of the Lord in His history? The speakers are Israel now believing, and confessing their former unbelief. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Christ in Isaiah:*—As an artisan, laying a mosaic of complicated pattern and diverse colours, has before him a working-drawing, and carefully fits the minute pieces of precious stone and enamel according to it, till the perfection of the design is revealed to all, so do the evangelists and apostles, with the working-drawing of Old Testament prophecy, and Old Testament types and shadows in the tabernacle services and ceremonies, in their hands, fit together the details of Christ's life on earth, His atoning death and His resurrection, and say, "Behold, this can be none other than the long looked-for Messiah." The central knop, or flower pattern, of the mosaic, from which all other details of the design radiated, was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. (*F. Sessions.*) *The suffering Saviour:*—I. We are led to THE ANTICIPATED LOWLINESS OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS SERVANT, the Messiah. He would be low in the esteem of men, even of those He comes to serve. *The Jews and Messianic prophecy:*—From the Jews wresting this text, observe—1. That there is an evil disposition in men to turn off upon others that which nearly concerns themselves. 2. That it is no new thing in persons to vouch that for themselves which makes most against them. Thus the Jews do this chapter against the Gentiles. 3. When God, for the wickedness of a people, hardeneth their hearts, they are apt to mistake in that which is most plain. 4. From the prophet's great admiration, observe, that when we can do no good upon a people, the most effectual way is to complain of it to God. 5. Those that profess the name of God may be much prejudiced against the entertainment of those truths and counsels that He makes known to them for their good. 6. It is a wonder they should not believe so plain a discovery of Christ, though by the just judgment of God they did not. 7. The first believing of Christ is a believing the report of Him; but afterwards there are experiences to confirm our belief (1 Pet. ii. 3; John iv. 42). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Christ preached, but rejected:*—I. JESUS CHRIST MAY BE CLEARLY REPRESENTED TO A PEOPLE, AND YET BUT FEW WON TO BELIEVE IN HIM. II. THE GOSPEL IS THE ARM AND POWER OF GOD. III. SO FEW BELIEVE, BECAUSE GOD'S ARM IS NOT REVEALED TO THEM: the power of the Word is not manifested by the Spirit. (*Ibid.*) *Jewish prejudice against Christ:*—At the time of Christ's being in the flesh there were divers prejudices against Him in the Jews. 1. An erroneous opinion of the Messiah. 2. A fond reverence of Moses and the prophets, as if it were derogatory to them to close with Christ (John ix. 29). 3. Offence at His outward meanness (that is the scope of this chapter), and the persecution He met with. (*Ibid.*) *Gentile prejudice against Christ:*—1. Pride in the understanding (1 Cor. i. 23). 2. The meanness of the reporters—poor fishermen. 3. The hard conditions upon which they were to entertain Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Christ rejected in our time:*—The hindrances to believing in Him are these: 1. Ignorance. Men hear of Christ, but are not acquainted with Him. 2. An easy slightness; men do not labour after faith. 3. A careless security. They think themselves well enough

without Him. 4. A light esteem of Christ. As we do not see our own needs, so not His worth. 5. A presumptuous conceit that we have entertained Christ already. Many think every slight wish, every trivial hope, will serve the turn. 6. Hardness of heart. 7. Self-confidence. 8. Carnal fears. These hinder the soul from closing with that mercy that is reported to be in Christ. They are of divers sorts. (1) Fear of God's anger, as if He were so displeased with us that certainly He did not intend Christ for us. (2) Fear of being too bold with the promises. (3) Fear of the sin of presumption. 9. Carnal reasonings from our sins. 10. Carnal apprehensions of Christ. (*Ibid.*) *The credibility and importance of the Gospel report:*—I. WE WILL CONTEMPLATE THIS REPORT, AND INQUIRE WHETHER IT IS NOT WORTHY OF OUR ATTENTION AND BELIEF. 1. The report which we hear, is a most instructive report. It brings us information of many things which were before unknown, and which, without this information, never could have been known to the sons of men. "That which had not been told us, we see." The Gospel for this reason is called a message, good tidings, and tidings of great joy. The leading truths of natural religion are agreeable to the dictates of reason; and perhaps might be, in some measure, discovered without revelation. At least they were known among those who had never enjoyed a written revelation, though, indeed, we cannot say how far these might be indebted to traditional information. But certainly those truths, which immediately relate to the recovery and salvation of sinners, human reason could never investigate. 2. The Gospel is a report from heaven. It was, in some degree, made known to the patriarchs, and afterwards more fully to the prophets. But "God . . . has in these last days, spoken to us by His Son." 3. The Gospel is a credible report. Many reports come to us without evidence: we only hear them, but know not what is their foundation, or whether they have any. And yet even these reports pass not wholly unregarded. But, if any important intelligence is brought to us which is both rational in itself, and at the same time supported by a competent number of reputable witnesses, we may much rather judge it worthy of our attention and belief. With this evidence the Gospel comes. It is credible in its own nature. The doctrines of the Gospel, though beyond the discovery and above the comprehension of reason, are in no instance contrary to its dictates. They are all adapted to promote real virtue and righteousness. Besides this internal evidence, God has been pleased to give it the sanction of His own testimony. Errors have sometimes been introduced and propagated by the artful reasoning of interested men. But Christianity rests not on the basis of human reasoning, or a subtle intricate train of argumentation: it stands on the ground of plain facts, of which every man is able to judge. The life, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth are the facts which support it. If these did really take place, the Gospel is true. Whether they did or not, men of common abilities were as competent to judge, as men of the profoundest learning. We, who live in the present age, have not, in every respect, the same evidence of the truth of the Gospel as they had, who were eye-witnesses of those facts. But we have their testimony, in the most authentic manner, conveyed to us. Some advantages we have, which they had not. We have the examination of preceding ages. We see Christianity still supporting itself against all the opposition of the world. We see the unwearied attempts of its enemies to subvert it, rendered fruitless and vain. We see many of the predictions contained in these records, already verified; and others, to all appearance, hastening on towards an accomplishment. 4. It is an interesting report. From the Gospel we learn that the human race have, by transgression, fallen under the Divine displeasure. This report corresponds with our own experience and observation. The Gospel brings us a joyful message. 5. This is a public report. It is what we have all heard, and heard often. II. WE WILL CONSIDER THE COMPLAINT. "Who hath believed our report?" (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *Do the prophets believe?*—"Who hath believed our report?" This inquiry has been read in various ways. Each of the ways has had its own accent and good lesson. 1. For example, the figure might be that of the prophets gathered together in conference and bemoaning in each other's hearing that their sermons or prophecies had come to nothing. We have preached all this while, and nobody has believed; why preach any more? If this thing were of God it would result in great harvests: it results in barrenness, and we are disappointed prophets. That is one way. Many excellent remarks have been made under that construction of the inquiry. 2. But that is not the meaning of the prophecy. The Revised Version helps us to see it more clearly, by reading the word thus:—"Who hath believed that which we have heard?" The idea is that the prophets are not rebuking

other people; the tremendous idea is that the prophets are interrogating themselves and saying, in effect at least, Have we believed our own prophecy? is there a believer in all the Church? is not the Church a nest of unbelievers? That puts a very different face upon the interrogation. We shall now come to great Gospels; when the prophets flagellate themselves we shall have some good preaching. We might put the inquiry, if not literally, yet spiritually and experimentally, thus:—Which of us, even the prophets, have believed? We have said the right thing; people might listen with entranced attention to such eloquence as ours: but is it red with the blood of trust, has it gone forth from us taking our souls with it? If not, we are as the voice of the charmer; men are saying of each of us, He hath a pleasant voice, what he says is said most tunefully, but the man himself is not behind it and in it and above it: it is a recitation, not a prophecy. 3. Who can find fault with the prophets? Not one of us, least of all myself. They had some hard things to believe; men do not willingly believe in wildernesses and barren rocks, and declarations that have in them no poetry and on them no lustre from heaven, hard and perilous sayings. Who can believe this, that when the Anointed of the Lord shall come, the Chosen One, He shall be "as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him?" It is incredible; if He is God's own Son He will be more beautiful than the dawn of summer. But God will not flatter His servants; He says to each of them, even the loftiest in stature of soul, Go out and proclaim a Cross. It is always so with this Christ; He is all Cross at the first: but what a summer there is hidden in the clouds! and it will come as it were suddenly. The prophets worked their own way under the guidance of the Holy Spirit out of this darkness. Having dwelt more largely upon the tragical aspect of the life of this great One, they say towards the close, "He shall see His seed." That is a new tone; "He shall prolong his days," that is a new tone; "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Why, they have turned the corner; they are getting up into the sunshine, they are unfurling the flag on the mountain-top. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied:" His blood shall buy the universe. This is the other end; this the other aspect of the Gospel. You will never profitably read the Scriptures until you take the darkness with the light. 4. What is the application of this? Why are you wondering that other people do not believe? The voice says, Friend! didst thou believe thine own sermon? Was it alive with thine heart? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A heavy complaint and lamentation:*—I. To WHOM IT WAS MADE. We find from parallel Scriptures that it is made to the Lord Himself (John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16). II. WHOM IT RESPECTS. It respects the hearers of the Gospel in the prophet's time, and in after times too. III. THE MAKER OF THIS HEAVY LAMENTATION. 1. The unsuccessfulness of the Gospel, and prevailing unbelief among them that heard it. Consider—(1) What the Gospel is. A "report." The word signifies a "hearing," a thing to be heard and received by faith, as a voice is received and heard by the ear. Hence that expression, "the hearing of faith" (Gal. iii. 2). (2) What faith is. It is a giving credit to the Gospel, and a trusting our souls to it, as on a word that cannot fail. (3) How rare that faith is. "Who hath believed?" The report is brought to multitudes; but where is the man that really trusts it, as news from heaven, that may be relied on? 2. The great withdrawing of the power of God from ordinances. "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" This implies (1) That there is a necessity of the mighty power of God being exerted on a man, to cause him to believe (John vi. 44). (2) That few, very few, felt this power. (3) That hence so few believed. (*T. Boston, M.A.*) *The little success of the Gospel matter of lamentation:*—I. WHAT IS THAT SUCCESS WHICH THE GOSPEL SOMETIMES HATH? It is successful—1. When sinners are thereby brought to faith in Christ (Rom. i. 17). 2. When they are thereby brought to holiness of life (2 Cor. iii. 18). II. WHAT IS THAT DIVINE POWER WHICH SOMETIMES COMES ALONG WITH GOSPEL-ORDINANCES? 1. A heart and life discovering power (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). The word comes, and the Lord's arm comes with it, and opens the volume of a man's heart and the life, and it is as if the preacher were reading the secret history of a man's thoughts and actions (Heb. iv. 12). 2. A sharp, convincing power, whereby the sinner does not only see his sin, but sees the ill and danger of it, and is touched to the heart with it (Acts xxiv. 25). 3. A drawing and converting power (John xii. 32; Ps. xix. 7). 4. A quickening power (Ps. cxix. 50). 5. A clearing power, resolving doubts, removing mistakes and darkness in certain particulars, whereby one is retarded in their spiritual course (Ps. xix. 7, 8). 6. A comforting power (Ps. cxix. 49, 50). 7. A strengthening power. The Spirit, with

the Word blowing on the dry bones, makes them stand on their feet like a great army. 8. A soul-elevating and heart-ravishing power (Luke xxiv. 32). III. THE REASONS OF THE DOCTRINE. 1. It must be a matter of lamentation to the godly in general. For—(1) The honour of Christ is thereby overclouded. (2) The glory of the glorious Gospel is thereby veiled. (3) Souls are thereby lost, while salvation is come to their door. (4) The godly themselves suffer loss, the thronger Christ's family is, the better thriven are the children; and contrariwise. If there were more converting, there would be more confirming work too. 2. Particularly to godly ministers. (1) Thereby their care and pains are much lost, and in vain. (2) Their work is rendered more difficult and wearisome. (3) The seals of their ministry are but small. (*Ibid.*) *Evidences of non-success*:—1. The slighting of Gospel ordinances that so much prevails. 2. Little reformation of life under the dispensation of the Gospel. 3. Much formality in attendance on ordinances. 4. Little of the work of conversion or soul-exercise. (*Ibid.*) *The Gospel-report*:—I. CONSIDER THE GOSPEL AS IT IS A REPORT. View it—1. In the nature of a report in general. (1) There is the subject of a report, or the thing that is reported, some design, action, or event, true or false. The subject of the Gospel-report is, a love-design in God for the salvation of sinners of mankind (2 Tim. i. 9, 10). It is the report of an act of grace and kindness in God, in favours of them, whereby He has given them His Son for a Saviour (John iii. 16; Isa. ix. 6), and eternal life in Him (1 John v. 11). The report of the event of Christ's dying for sinners. (2) There is the place whence the report originally comes. And the place here is heaven. Hence the Gospel is called "heavenly things" (John iii. 12), revealed from the bosom of the Father. (3) The matter of a report is something unseen to them to whom the report is made. And so is the matter of the Gospel-report. It is an unseen God (John i. 18); an unseen Saviour (1 Pet. i. 8); and unseen things (2 Cor. iv. 18), that are preached unto you by the Gospel. So the Gospel is an object of faith, not of sight (Heb. xi. 1). We receive it by hearing, not by seeing (Isa. lv. 3). (4) There is a reporter or reporters. And in this case the report is made by many. The first-hand reporter is an eye-witness, Jesus Christ. Christ Himself was the raiser of the report of the Gospel (Heb. ii. 3). And who else could have been so? (John i. 18). What He reported He saw, and gives us His testimony of the truth of it on His eyesight (John iii. 11). Hence He is proposed to us as "the faithful and true Witness" (Rev. iii. 14), who was from eternity privy to the whole design revealed to us in the Gospel. The prophets and apostles, and ministers of the Gospel. They are the second-hand reporters. (5) There is a manifestation of the thing by the report, to the parties to whom the report is made. So is the grace of God to poor sinners manifested to them by the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 9, 10). 2. In the nature of a report to be trusted to, for some valuable end. And so it is—(1) A true and faithful report, that one may safely trust (1 Tim. i. 15). (2) An infallible report. A report may be true where there is no infallibility: but the report of the Gospel is an infallible truth (Acts i. 3), for it is "the Word of God that cannot lie" (1 Thes. ii. 13). And the Spirit of the Lord demonstrates it to believers, as Divine truth (1 Cor. ii. 4). (3) A good and comfortable report. (4) A weighty report, even of the greatest weight, as concerning man's greatest possible interest (Isa. lxi. 6). II. CONSIDER FAITH AS IT IS A TRUSTING TO THIS REPORT. Faith is—1. A trusting of the Gospel-report as true. (1) In the general, with respect to the multitude whom it concerns. "It is a faithful saying, Christ came to save sinners." (2) In particular, with respect to oneself. Faith believes that there is a fulness in Christ for poor sinners, and for oneself in particular. Hence it appears—That there is an assurance in the nature of faith, whereby the believing person is sure of the truth of the doctrine of the Gospel, and that with respect to himself particularly (1 Thes. i. 5). That there is a necessity of an inward illumination by the Spirit, in order to the faith of the Gospel (1 Cor. ii. 10–14). 2. A trusting to the Gospel-report as good. It implies—(1) Not only a willingness, but a sincere desire to be delivered from sin, as well as from wrath. (2) A renouncing of all other confidence for his salvation. (3) A hearty approbation of the way of salvation manifested in the report of the Gospel (Matt. xi. 6). (4) A betaking one's self entirely to that way of salvation, by trusting to it wholly for our own salvation. (5) A confidence or trust, that He will save us from sin and wrath, according to His promise (Acts xv. 11). III. CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE TRUSTING TO IT, CONJUNCTLY. The Gospel is a report from heaven—1. Of salvation for poor sinners, from sin (Matt. i. 21), and from the wrath of God (John iii. 16), freely made over to you in the Word of promise. Faith trusts it as a true report,

believing that God has said it; and trusts to it as good, laying our own salvation upon it. 2. Of a crucified Christ made over to sinners, as the device of Heaven for their salvation. The soul concludes, the Saviour is mine; and leans on Him for all the purchase of His death, for life and salvation to itself in particular (1 Cor. ii. 2). 3. Of a righteousness wherein we guilty ones may stand before a holy God (Rom. i. 17). And by faith one believes there is such a righteousness, that it is sufficient to cover him, and that it is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness; and so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and betaking himself to it alone (Gal. ii. 16). 4. Of a pardon under the great seal of Heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it in Him (Acts xiii. 38, 39). The soul by faith believes this to be true, and applies it to itself, saying, This pardon is for me. 5. Of a Physician that cures infallibly all the diseases of the soul. The soul believes it, and applies it to its own case. 6. Of a feast for hungry souls, to which all are bid welcome, Christ Himself being the Maker and matter of it too. The soul weary of the husks of created things, and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ. 7. Of a victory won by Jesus Christ over sin, Satan, and death, and the world. The soul trusts to it for its victory over all these, as already foiled enemies (1 John v. 4). 8. Of a peace purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners, and offered to them. Faith believes it; and the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications for supply before the throne. (*Ibid.*) *The rarity of believing the Gospel-report:*—I. CONFIRM THIS POINT. 1. Take a view of the Church in all ages, and the entertainment the Gospel has met with among them to whom it came. It has been a despised and disbelieved Gospel. (1) Under the patriarchal dispensation, from Adam to Moses. By Adam and Eve it was believed, and Adam preached it; but Cain slew Abel and headed an apostasy, etc. (2) Under the Mosaic dispensation, they had the Gospel, though veiled with types and figures. But the body of the generation that came out of Egypt, believed not, but fell in the wilderness (Heb. iv. 2). (3) Under the Christian dispensation (John xii. 37, 38; Rom. x. 16). At the Reformation the Gospel had remarkable success; yet believers were but few comparatively; and there have been but few all along since that time. 2. Take a view of the Church, setting aside those whom the Scripture determines to be unbelievers; and we will soon see that but few do remain. Set aside—(1) The grossly ignorant of Christ, and of the truths of the Gospel. How can they believe the Gospel, that know not what it is? (2) The profane, who are Christians in name, because they live in a Christian country; but have not a shape of Christianity about them. Surely these do not believe the Gospel (Tit. i. 16). (3) The carnal and worldly, who make the world their chief good, mainly seeking that, and favouring it only. These undoubtedly are unbelievers (Phil. iii. 19, 20). (4) Mere moralists, all whose religion is confined to some pieces of the second table (Matt. v. 20). (5) Gross hypocrites. That Gospel that cleanses not a man's hands from unjust dealing, his mouth from lying, swearing and filthy speaking, is certainly not believed. (6) Close hypocrites, whose outward conversation is blameless in the eye of the world, but in the meantime are inwardly strangers to God and Christ (Rev. iii. 1). (7) All unregenerate persons; for they are certainly unbelievers, as believers are regenerate. Set aside then all these, few remain who trust to the Gospel report. II. THE REASONS WHY SO FEW BELIEVE THE REPORT OF THE GOSPEL. 1. There is a natural impotency in all (John vi. 44). Believing the report of the Gospel is beyond the power of nature. Yea, everything in nature is against it, till the Spirit of the Lord overcome them into belief of the report of the Gospel. 2. The predominant power of lusts, to which the Gospel is an enemy. There our Lord lodges it (John iii. 19). 3. There is a judicial blindness on many (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). (*Ibid.*) *Divine power necessary for believing the Gospel report:*—There is no true believing or trusting to the report of the Gospel, but what is the effect of the working of a Divine power on the soul for that end. I. EVINCE THE TRUTH OF THE DOCTRINE. Consider for it—1. Express Scripture testimony (John vi. 44). 2. The state that by nature we are in, "dead in sin" (Eph. ii. 1). Faith is the first vital act of the soul, quickened by the Spirit of life from Jesus Christ. 3. There can be no faith without knowledge: and the knowledge of spiritual things man is by nature incapable of (1 Cor. ii. 14). 4. Man is naturally under the power of Satan, a captive of the devil, who with his utmost efforts will hinder the work of faith (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). Such a case the Gospel finds men in; and it is the design of the Gospel to bring them out of it (Acts xxvi. 17, 18). 5. Man's trust is by nature firmly preoccupied by those things which the Gospel calls them to renounce. He is wedded to other confidences naturally, which therefore he will hold

by, till a power above nature carry him off from them—self-confidence, creature-confidence, law-confidence. 6. Man has a strong bias and bent against believing or trusting to the Gospel (John v. 40; Rom. x. 3). 7. It is the product of the Holy Spirit, wherever it is. II. WHAT IS THAT WORKING OF DIVINE POWER WHEREBY THE SOUL IS BROUGHT TO TRUST TO THE GOSPEL REPORT? There is a twofold work of Divine power on the soul for that end. 1. A mediate work, which is preparatory to it; whereof the Spirit is the author, and the instrument is the law. (1) An awakening work. (2) A humbling work, whereby the proud sinner is brought low to the dust: not only finding a need of salvation, but an absolute need of Christ for salvation. So he is broken off from self-confidence, creature-confidence, law-confidence. 2. An immediate work, whereby faith is produced in the soul; whereof the Spirit is the author, and the Gospel the instrument. It is—(1) A quickening work, whereby the dead soul is called again to spiritual life (Eph. ii. 1). (2) An illuminating work. There is a knowledge in faith. (*Ibid.*) *The Monarch in disguise:*—There are four distinctive features predicted—1. The lowliness, obscurity and sorrow of the coming Servant of God. 2. The putting forth of "the arm of the Lord" in Him and in His work. 3. The setting forth of this in a message or "report." 4. The concealing, as it were, of the "arm of the Lord," owing to the lowly appearance of this Servant. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Preaching and hearing:*—I. THE GREAT SUBJECT OF PREACHING, and the preacher's great errand, is to report concerning Jesus Christ—to bring good tidings concerning Him. II. THE GREAT DUTY OF HEARERS is, to believe this report and, by virtue of it, to be brought to rest on Jesus Christ. III. THE GREAT, THOUGH THE ORDINARY, SIN OF THE GENERALITY OF THE HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL is unbelief. IV. THE GREAT COMPLAINT, WEIGHT AND GRIEF OF AN HONEST MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL is this—that his message is not taken off his hand; that Christ is not received, believed in and rested on. (*J. Durham.*) *The offer of Christ in the Gospel:*—I. The offering of Christ in the Gospel is WARRANT enough to believe in Him. Otherwise there had been no just ground of expostulation and complaint for not believing. The complaint is for the neglect of the duty they were called to. II. They to whom Christ is offered in the Gospel are CALLED to believe. It is their duty to do it. III. Saving faith is THE WAY AND MEANS by which those who have Christ offered to them in the Gospel come to get a right to Him, and to obtain the benefits that are reported of to be had from Him. (*Ibid.*) *The necessity of faith:*—1. Look to all the promises, whether of pardon of sin, peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost, holiness and conformity to God—there is no access to these, or to any of them, but by faith. 2. Look to the performance of any duty, or mortification of any lust or idol, and faith is necessary to that. 3. Whenever any duty is done, there is no acceptation of it without faith (Heb. iv. 2; xi. 6). (*Ibid.*) *A faithful minister's sorrow:*—It is most sad to a tender minister to see unbelief and unfruitfulness among the people he hath preached the Gospel to. There is a fourfold reason of this—1. Respect to Christ Jesus his Master, in whose stead he comes to woo souls to Christ. 2. The respect he hath to people's souls. 3. The respect he hath to the duty in hand. 4. Concern for his own joy and comfort (Phil. ii. 16). (*Ibid.*) *The prevalence of unbelief:*—I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF THE GOSPEL. A "report." Let us see—1. In what respects it resembles a report. A report is the statement of things or facts done or occurring at some distance of time or place; of things which we ourselves have not seen, but of which an account has been brought to us by others, and to which our belief is demanded in proportion to the degree of credibility which attaches to those who bring us the account. Such is the Gospel. 2. In what respects this report differs from all other reports. This difference may be traced in the importance of the truths which it professes to communicate, no less than in the evidence by which it is confirmed. II. THE QUESTION WHICH THE PROPHET ASKS IN REFERENCE TO IT, "Who hath believed our report?" This question is evidently the language of complaint, of surprise, and of grief. And has there not been always occasion for such language as this? (*E. Cooper.*) *Ministerial solicitude:*—Every minister of Jesus Christ, imbued with the spirit of his office, is anxious—(1) To make a faithful report; (2) Then, in many living witnesses, to behold the illustration of an apostle's assertion, "Faith cometh by hearing," etc. I. THE REPORT WHICH THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL MAKE. The "report" of Isaiah is the "saying" of Paul (1 Tim. i. 15). 1. It demands and deserves your attention, for we bring it from heaven. 2. It is a report of universal interest, for it is to be made to all the world. 3. Our report is of the very highest importance, for it refers to the state of the soul. 4. It is a report of the strictest veracity, being confirmed by many credible witnesses. II. THE

ANXIETY WHICH THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL FEEL. 1. This report is very generally neglected. 2. This neglect is the result of unbelief. 3. This neglect is, to those who make it, a subject of devout solicitude and of deep regret. 4. When this report is believed, it operates with Divine efficiency. What think you of our report? (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?—*The arm of the Lord revealed:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE ARM OF THE LORD." II. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE REVEALING OF THE ARM OF THE LORD. III. THE SCOPE AND DEPENDENCE OF THESE WORDS ON THE FORMER. (*J. Durham.*) *The arm of the Lord:*—"To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It has been made bare these many centuries, and how few have seen it, or recognized it, or called it by its proper name! We have had continuity, and succession, and evolution, and development, and progress, and laws of nature; but not "the arm of the Lord." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The might of the saving arm, and how to obtain it* (with John xi. 40):—A lawyer whom I know took me to see the fire-proof strong-room in which he keeps valuable deeds and securities. It is excavated under the street, and a passage leads far into the interior, lined on either side with receptacles for the precious documents. On entering, he took up what appeared to be a candle, with a cord attached to it; the other end he deftly fastened to a switch at the entrance, by means of which the electricity which was waiting there poured up the wire hidden in the cord, glowed at the wick of the china candle, and we were able to pass to the end of the passage, uncoiling cord and wire as we went. That unlighted candle resembles the Christian worker apart from the power of the Holy Ghost. Faith may be compared to the switch by means of which the saving might of God pours into our life and ministry. It cannot be too strongly insisted on, that our faith is the absolute condition and measure of the exertion of God's saving might. No faith, no blessing; little faith, little blessing; great faith, great blessing. The saving might of God's glorious arm may be waiting close against us; but it is inoperative unless we are united to it by faith. The negative and positive sides of this great and important truth are presented in the texts before us: one of which complains that the arm of God is not revealed, because men have not believed the inspired report; the other affirms from the lips of the Master, that those who believe shall see the glory of God. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The arm of God and human faith* (with John xi. 40):—I. THE ARM OF GOD. This expression is often used in the older Scriptures, and everywhere signifies the active, saving energy of the Most High. We first meet with it in His own address to Moses: "I will redeem them with a stretched-out arm." Then, in the triumphant shout that broke from two million glad voices beside the Red Sea—and frequently in the book of Deuteronomy—we read of the stretched-out arm of Jehovah. It is a favourite phrase with the poets and prophets of Israel—the arm that redeems; the holy arm; the glorious arm; the bared arm of God. The conception is that, owing to the unbelief of Israel, it lies inoperative, hidden under the heavy folds of Oriental drapery; whereas it might be revealed, raising itself aloft in vigorous and effective effort. All that concerns us now is the relation between faith and the forth-putting of God's saving might. II. THE LIFE OF THE SON OF MAN. As this chapter suggests, it seemed, from many points of view, a failure. The arm of the Lord was in Him, though hidden from all save the handful who believed. III. A SPECIMEN CASE. Even though our Lord went to Bethany with the assurance that the arm of the Lord would certainly be made bare, yet He must of necessity have the co-operation and sympathy of some one's faith. 1. Such faith He discovered in Martha. Her admissions showed that faith was already within her soul, as a grain of mustard-seed, awaiting the summertide of God's presence, the education of His grace. There are many earnest Christians whose energies are taxed to the uttermost by their ministry to others. They have no time to sit quietly at the feet of Christ, or mature great schemes of loving sympathy with His plans, as Mary did when she prepared her anointing-oil for her Lord's burial. And yet they are capable of a great faith. Christ will one day discover, reveal and educate that faith to great exploits. 2. He put a promise before her—"Thy brother shall rise again." Faith feeds on promises. 3. He showed that its fulfilment might be expected here and now. Jesus said, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life. Here and now is the power which, on that day of which you speak, shall awaken the dead; do but believe, and you shall see that resurrection anticipated." Ponder the force of this I AM. It is the present tense of the Eternal. 4. He aroused her expectancy. For what other reason did He ask that the stone might be rolled away? She believed, and she beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The one aim for each of us should be to bring Christ and the dead Lazarus together. Let us ask

Christ, our Saviour, to work such faith in us; to develop it by every method of education and discipline; to mature it by his nurturing Spirit, until the arm of God is revealed in us and through us, and the glory of God is manifested before the gaze of men. At the same time, it is not well to concentrate our thought too much on faith, lest we hinder its growth. Look away from faith to the Object of faith, and faith will spring of itself. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. **For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant.**—*God accomplishes great things by unlikely means:*—1. God prosecuteth and accomplisheth His greatest designs by the most unlikely and despised means. Jesus Christ, the great Saviour of the world, was but a tender plant, which a man would be more apt to tread upon and crush, than to cherish. 2. God cometh in for the deliverance of His people in times of greatest despair and unlikelihood. For when the branches of Jesse were dried up, and had no verdure, even then sprung up the greatest ornament of that stock, although a root out of a dry ground. 3. Mean beginnings may grow up to great matters and glorious successes. Christ, the tender plant, was to be a tall tree. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *God to be trusted:*—You have no cause to distrust God; though He doth not find means, He can create them. The root of Jesse, though there be no branches, it can bear a sprig. God, that could make the world out of nothing, can preserve the Church by nothing. (*Ibid.*) *Christ a tender plant:*—1. Christ in His humiliation appeared in great feebleness; born a helpless babe, He was in His infancy in great danger from the hand of Herod, and though preserved, it was not by a powerful army, but by flight into another land. His early days were not spent amid the martial music of camps, or in the grandeur of courts, but in the retirement of a carpenter's shop—fit place for "a tender plant." His life was gentleness, He was harmless as a lamb. At any time it seemed easy to destroy both Him and His system. When He was nailed to the Cross to die, did it not appear as if His whole work had utterly collapsed and His religion would be for ever stamped out? The Cross threatened to be the death of Christianity as well as of Christ; but it was not so, for in a few days the power of the Divine Spirit came upon the Church. 2. At its first setting up, how feeble was the kingdom of our Lord! When Herod stretched out His hand to vex certain of the Church, unbelief might have said, "There will be an utter end ere long." When, in after years, the Roman emperors turned the whole imperial power against the Gospel, stretching forth an arm long enough to encompass the entire globe, and uplifting a hand more heavy than an iron hammer, how could it be supposed that the Christian Church would still live on? It bowed before the storm like a tender shoot, but it was not uprooted by the tempest; it survives to this day; and although we do not rejoice at this moment in all the success which we could desire, yet still that tender shoot is full of vitality, we perceive the blossoms of hope upon it, and expect soon to gather goodly clusters of success. 3. Christianity in our own hearts—the Christ within us—is also a "tender plant." In its upspringing it is as the green blade of corn, which any beast that goeth by may tread upon or devour. Oftentimes, to our apprehension, it has seemed that our spiritual life would soon die: it was no better than a lily, with a stalk bruised and all but snapped in twain. The mower's scythe of temptation has cut down the outgrowth of our spiritual life, but He who cometh down like rain upon the mown grass has restored our verdure and maintained our vigour to this day. Tender as our religion is, it is beyond the power of Satan to destroy it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Growth before God:*—There is one word which marks the difference between the work of God and the work of man. It is the word "growth." No human work can grow. For though we speak of a picture growing under the brush of the painter, or of a statue growing under the chisel of the sculptor, this is only a figure of speech. 1. But there is no work of God that cannot grow. This world itself grew into being. It grew up before God as the wild flower does—grew out of chaos, into order and beauty, and we can read on the rocks the story of its growth. There is a greater world than this—the world of Divine truth. And this also has been a growth from the beginning. 2. No wonder, then, that the Son of God grew up before the Lord—that the Lord of nature conformed to the law of nature. The sacred historian is not to be found tripping here, like the mediæval romancist. He does not outrage the order of nature by a single story of monstrous precocity. There is not a part of the being of Jesus which he excludes from the order of growth. In body, mind and spirit he declares the child grew up before the Lord. 3. What hope is there here for man! The Son of God had to grow, and the meanest child of man can grow. If we had no power of growth but that which we possess in

common with the animal and the tree, then were we of all creatures the most miserable. Because we have in us the power of an endless growth in all that is great and good, we are creatures of the Most Blessed. And we must grow. That is our destiny. Our Christianity is not a piece of mechanism that was finished off at the date of conversion. It is a life that has been born within the soul. We are growing, either upwards or downwards, either better or worse, either to honour or to shame. 4. But how may a noble and Divine growth be ensured? It is a question that is not left unanswered in my text. For we are told that the plant of which it speaks grew up before the Lord. It was the fondest desire of the Hebrew mother's heart that her son should grow up before the Lord. She would rather have him grow up before the Lord in the temple than before the king in the palace. There can be no higher position or nobler prospect for a man than to grow up before his God. The child Samuel and the child Jesus grew up before the same God, but how differently. The former under the very shadow of the altar, under the wing of the old, blind priest, utterly secluded from the common ways of men; but Jesus, at His mother's knee in the village home, in the midst of His little relatives and playmates, among the workmen at the bench, and the old familiar faces in street and synagogue. And so it has become a Christian commonplace that you can grow up before the Lord anywhere. 5. But we are further informed of the special fashion in which Jesus grew up before the Lord. "As a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground," we read. But the Hebrew contains a more explicit meaning. It is this: "He grew up before God like a fresh sucker from a root springing out of a dry ground." The old plant is the house of David, once so glorious in flower and fruitage, at last cut down and withered. The dry soil is the barren religious life of Israel. The fresh young sucker is the Son of Man. That it did grow to what we see is the supreme miracle of Christianity. Its principal evidence is in its own marvellous growth. This is the dilemma in which Christianity still keeps its foes, and to which all additional thought and investigation can only add strength. From such a root, in such a soil, how did Jesus grow to be the Christ of history? It must either be acknowledged to be the supreme miracle or the supreme mystery of time. And this is the one Christian miracle which keeps repeating itself century after century. From the withered plant, and out of the desert soil, God is evermore producing His plants of renown. How was it, for example, that Luther grew to be the man he was, and to wield the power he did? Was it from the withered root of the mediæval Church or the desert soil of the monastery that he derived his power? Or was he right when he declared the conviction of his heart that it was all by the grace of God through faith? History discloses to us nothing so glorious as these Divine developments of the soul of man. The grace that has achieved these things is in the world as much as ever. 6. Why is it, then, that so many young men are excluding from their ambition in life that of growth in Christ? Why is it that so many of them murmur that the old creeds are dry, and the old Bible and the old familiar Church service, and that even the fountain of private devotion has ceased to water the wilderness? It is because they are not rooted in God and His truth, but are, many of them, like plants thrown out of a country nursery, which lie bleaching in the sun or are blown about by the wind. No wonder that religion seems dry to those who are not rooted in it. Young men! see to it that you go down into the truth which you profess to stand by, whether of creed, of catechism, or Bible, and you will find as much good in it as your fathers did. Thus settled and grounded, seek to grow in everything; put on nothing. All pretence is worse than waste of time and strength. And abjure all forced and unnatural growth, all ambition to fill rapidly a large space. Be content to occupy the ground that God has allotted to you, according to the nature that God has given. (*P. J. Rollo.*) **As a root out of a dry ground.**—*The root out of a dry ground:*—Owing to their geographical position, the central and western regions of South Africa are almost constantly deprived of rain. They contain no flowing streams, and very little water in the wells. The soil is a soft and light-coloured sand, which reflects the sunlight with a glaring intensity. No fresh breeze cools the air; no passing cloud veils the scorching sky. We should naturally have supposed that regions so scantily supplied with one of the first necessaries of life, could be nothing else than waste and lifeless deserts: and yet, strange to say, they are distinguished for their comparatively abundant vegetation, and their immense development of animal life. The evil produced by want of rain has been counteracted by the admirable foresight of the Creator, in providing these arid lands with plants suited to their trying circumstances. The vegetation is eminently local and special. Nothing like it is seen elsewhere on the

face of the earth. Nearly all the plants have tuberous roots, buried far beneath the ground, beyond the scorching effects of the sun, and are composed of succulent tissue, filled with a deliciously cool and refreshing fluid. They have also thick, fleshy leaves, with pores capable of imbibing and retaining moisture from a very dry atmosphere and soil; so that if a leaf be broken during the greatest drought, it shows abundant circulating sap. Nothing can look more unlike the situations in which they are found than these succulent roots, full of fluid when the surrounding soil is dry as dust, and the enveloping air seems utterly destitute of moisture; replete with nourishment and life when all within the horizon is desolation and death. They seem to have a special vitality in themselves; and, unlike all other plants, to be independent of circumstances. Such roots are also found in the deserts of Arabia; and it was doubtless one of them that suggested to the prophet the beautiful and expressive emblem of the text, "He shall grow up before him as a root out of a dry ground." (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Christ's growth before God:*—Commentators usually connect these words with the next clause of the verse, and regard them as implying that the promised Messiah would have no form or comeliness in the estimation of men, no outward beauty, that they should desire Him. This, I think, is a wrong interpretation. The words of the text are complete and separate. They speak not of the appearance of Christ to men, but of His growth in the sight of God. They refer not to His attractiveness, but to His functions; and the point that seems to be most insisted upon is, that His relation to the circumstances in which He should be placed would be one of perfect independence and self-sufficiency. (*Ibid.*) *The root out of a dry ground:*—In the light of this explanation let us look at the three ideas which the subject suggests to us—1. The living root. 2. The dry ground. 3. The effect of the living root upon the dry ground. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the living root:*—1. This emblem is peculiarly appropriate when applied to Christ. He is called the "Branch," to show that He is a member of the great organism of human life, in all things made like unto His brethren, yet without sin. He is a branch of the tree of humanity, nourished by its sap, pervaded by its life, blossoming with its affections, and yielding its fruits of usefulness. But He is more than the Branch. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots," is the spiritual language of prophecy relative to the coming of the Messiah; but the figure is speedily changed, and the Branch is also called "the Root of Jesse." This language is most strange and paradoxical. It reveals the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. Jesus is at one and the same time the Branch and the Root, the root of Jesse and the offspring of Jesse, David's Lord and David's son, because He is Emmanuel, God with us, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever; deriving His human life by natural descent from man, and possessing Divine life in Himself, and the author of spiritual life to others. The root of plants growing in a dry ground is the most important part of their structure. It lies at the basis of, and involves the whole plant. The whole growth of a lily, for instance, lies folded up within its bulb. And so Christ lies at the basis of, and involves the whole spiritual life. 2. It is assuredly the most precious, as it is the most distinguishing, feature of the Christian religion, that it places the foundation of eternal life in living relations with a living Person, rather than in the profession of a creed or the practice of a duty. (1) One of the principal functions which the root performs in the economy of vegetation is to attach the plant to the soil, and prevent it from moving hither and thither at the mercy of the elements. So Christ is the living root of our spiritual life, connecting it with the whole system of grace, the whole economy of redemption. It is only when united to Christ by a living faith that the soul can lay hold on heaven and immortality. (2) Another purpose which the root serves in the economy of vegetation is to feed the plant. Through the spongioles of the root, the plant imbibes from the soil in which it is placed the needful sap by which it is sustained; and in this simple way the whole important and complicated processes are carried on, by which crude soil is converted into the needful constituents of vegetable matter. For this purpose the root possesses certain structural peculiarities adapting it to its special functions. Just as there is provision made for the growth of the germ in the starchy contents of the seed, until it has attained an independent existence; so there is provision made in the nutritive tissue of the bulb or tuber for the support of the plant which it produces. This function also the Root of Jesse performs in the case of those who are rooted in Him. He is the mediator of the New Covenant; the only channel by which spiritual blessings can be communicated to us. (*Ibid.*) *The unfoldings of the Root of Jesse:*—All the individual life of the

Christian, with its blossoms of holiness and its fruits of righteousness; all the Christian life of society, with its things that are pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, is but a development and a manifestation of the life of Christ in the heart and in the world; a growth and unfolding of the power, the beauty, and the sweetness that are hid in the Root of Jesse. (*Ibid.*) *The dry ground:*—There is usually a very intimate connection between a plant and the circumstances in which it grows. Modifications of specific character are produced by varieties of soil; and the wide difference between a wild flower or fruit, and a garden flower or fruit, is entirely owing to the difference between rich cultivated soil and the poor untilled soil of nature. The plants of a dry ground, however, are less dependent upon the nature of their soil than others; they receive from it, in most cases, mere mechanical support and room to expand in, while their means of growth are derived entirely from the atmosphere. Looking at the emblem of the text in this light, we may suppose the "dry ground" here to mean—I. THAT HUMANITY OUT OF WHICH CHRIST SPRANG. There are many who regard Jesus as the natural product of humanity—the highest development of human nature, the blossom, so to speak, of mankind. But we look upon Him as a Divine germ planted in this wilderness, a Divine Being attaching Himself to men, wearing their nature, dwelling in their world, but still not of them—as distinct from humanity as the living root is distinct from the dry ground in which it grows. The soil of humanity is indeed dry ground. Sin has dried up its life, its fertility, turned its moisture into summer's drought, and reduced it to perpetual barrenness. By the law of natural development, mankind could never have given birth to a character in every way so exceptional as that of Christ. It is true indeed that a few individuals have ever and anon emerged from the dark chaos of fallen humanity, and exhibited a high type of intellectual and moral worth; but such individuals have been completely identified with the human race, and have shared in its sins and infirmities. In Jesus, on the contrary, there was a remarkable remoteness and separateness from men. His life ran parallel with man's, but it was never on the same low level. He was independent of worldly circumstances, and superior to worldly conventionalities. He had no joys on earth save those He brought with Him from heaven. He was alone, without sympathy, for no one could understand Him; without help, for no mortal aid could reach the necessities of His case. Like a desert well, He was for ever imparting what no one could give Him back. II. THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JEWS REGARDING THE MESSIAH. There are scientific men who believe in the doctrine of spontaneous or equivocal generation. And so there are theologians who assert that Christ was merely the natural product of the age and the circumstances in which He lived; the mere incarnation, so to speak, of the popular expectation of the time. In all their attempts to account for His life, without admitting Him to be a Divine person, they bring prominently into view whatever there was in Jewish history, belief, and literature, to prepare for and produce such a personality and character as those of Jesus; they endeavour to show that the condition of the Jewish world, when Christ appeared, was exactly that into which His appearing would fit; and that all these preparatory and formative conditions did of themselves, by a kind of natural spontaneous generation, produce Christ. In reply to these views, it may be admitted as an unquestionable historical fact, that the expectation of a Messiah ran like a golden thread throughout the whole complicated web of the Hebrew religion and polity. The expectations of the Jews did no more of themselves produce the Saviour, than the soil and climate produce, of their own accord, any particular plant. There was nothing in the age, nothing in the people, nothing in the influences by which he was surrounded, which could by any possibility have produced or developed such a remarkable character as He exhibited. There was no more relation between Him and His moral surroundings, than there is between a succulent life-full root and the arid sandy waste in which it grows. The counterfeit Messiahs were not roots out of a dry ground, but, on the contrary, mushrooms developed from the decaying life of the nation. There was a complete harmony between them and their moral surroundings. They were really and truly the products of the popular longing of the time; they agreed in every respect with their circumstances. The prevailing notions concerning the Messiah were worldly and carnal. III. THE CHARACTER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. Nothing can be more marked and striking than the contrast between the character of Christ and the general character of the Jewish nation—between the excellences which He displayed and those which they held in most esteem. It is said that a man represents the spirit and character of the age and the race to which he belongs. He seldom rises

above their general level. But here we have a man who not only rose high above the level of His age and nation, but stands out, in all that constitutes true moral manhood, in marked and decided contrast to them. He was descended from the Jewish people, but He was not of them. He was rooted in Jewish soil, but His life was a self-derived and heavenly life. This is a great and precious truth. Something has come into this world which is not of it. A supernatural power has descended into nature. A man has lived on our earth who cannot be ranked with mankind. A Divine Being has come from God, to be incarnate with us, and to lift us up to God. (*Ibid.*) *Christ binds humanity into a brotherhood:*—The roots of the desert, by their extensive ramifications, fix the constantly shifting sands, and prevent them from being drifted about in blinding clouds by every wind that blows. So the Root of Jesse binds the dry ground of humanity by its endless fibres of benevolence and love. The despised and apparently feeble Jesus of Nazareth was lifted up on the Cross, and then followed—according to His own prophecy—the drawing of all men to Him and to one another. Sin is selfishness and isolation; the love of Christ is benevolence and attraction. Jesus unites us to the Father, and therefore to one another. The love of Christians is not to be confined to their own society and fraternity. In Christ they have received expansion, not limitation—universal benevolence, not mere party spirit. (*Ibid.*) *A root out of a dry ground:*—I. THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF THIS METAPHOR. It applies to the person of the Lord, and also to His cause and Kingdom: to Himself personally and to Himself mystically. A root which springs up in a fat and fertile field owes very much to the soil in which it grows. Our Saviour is a root that derives nothing from the soil in which it grows, but puts everything into the soil. 1. It is quite certain that our Lord derived nothing whatever from His natural descent. He was the Son of David, the lawful heir to the royal dignities of the tribe of Judah; but His family had fallen into obscurity, had lost position, wealth, and repute. 2. Nor did our Lord derive assistance from His nationality; it was no general recommendation to His teaching that He was of the seed of Abraham. To this day, to many minds, it is almost shameful to mention that our Saviour was a Jew. The Romans were peculiarly tolerant of religions and customs; by conquest their empire had absorbed men of all languages and creeds, and they usually left them undisturbed; but the Jewish faith was too peculiar and intolerant to escape derision and hatred. After the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews were hunted down, and the connection of Christianity with Judaism so far from being an advantage to it became a serious hindrance to its growth. 3. Nor did the Saviour owe anything to His followers. Shall a world-subduing religion be disseminated by peasants and mariners? So did He ordain it. 4. Our Saviour is "a root out of a dry ground" as to the means He chose for the propagation of His faith. 5. Neither did the Saviour owe anything to times in which He lived. Christianity was born at a period of history when the world by wisdom knew not God, and men were most effectually alienated from Him. The more thinking part of the world's inhabitants were atheistic, and made ridicule of the gods, while the masses blindly worshipped whatever was set before them. The whole set and current of thought was in direct opposition to such a religion as He came to inculcate. It was an age of luxury. 6. Neither did the religion of Jesus owe anything to human nature. It is sometimes said that it commends itself to human nature. It is false: the religion of Jesus opposes unrenewed human nature. II. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ITS TRUTH EXPERIMENTALLY. You remember your own conversion. When Jesus Christ came to you to save you, did He find any fertile soil in your heart for the growth of His grace? III. This whole subject affords much ENCOURAGEMENT to many. 1. Let me speak a word to those who are seeking the Saviour, but are very conscious of your own sinfulness. Christ is all—does that not cheer you? 2. The same thought ought also to encourage any Christian who has been making discoveries of his own barrenness. When at any time you are cast down by a sense of your nothingness, remember that your Lord is "a root out of a dry ground." 3. The same comfort avails for every Christian worker. When you feel you are barren, do not fret or despair about it, but rather say, "Lord, here is a dry tree, come and make it bear fruit, and then I shall joyfully confess, from Thee is my fruit found." 4. Ought not this to comfort us with regard to the times in which we live? Bad times are famous times for Christ. 5. And thus we may be encouraged concerning any particularly wicked place. Do not say, "It is useless to preach down there, or to send missionaries to that uncivilized country." How do you know? Is it very dry ground? Well, that is hopeful soil; Christ is a "root out a dry ground," and the more there is to discourage

the more you should be encouraged. 6. The same is true of individual men; you should never say, "Well, such a man as that will never be converted." IV. THE GLORY WHICH ALL THIS DISPLAYS. Christ's laurels at this day are none of them borrowed. When He shall come in His glory there will be none among His friends who will say, "O King, Thou owest that jewel in Thy crown to me." Every one will own that He was the author and the finisher of the whole work, and therefore He must have all the glory of it, since we who were with Him were dry ground, and He gave life to us but borrowed nothing from us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ not the product of Palestine:*—According to Renan, the excellence of Jesus was due to the climate and soil of Palestine! But he forgets to ask how it is that the climate and soil of Palestine have never produced such another! (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) **He hath no form nor comeliness.**—*Christ's humble appearance:*—While we see no necessity for the Saviour of the world appearing in pomp and splendour, we can point out many important ends that may be answered by His having been made humble and of no reputation. 1. In this state His all-perfect example was of the most extensive benefit. He could exhibit virtues more in number, more difficult to practise, and more generally necessary, than there could have been room for in a higher rank and in less trying circumstances. And the virtues which such a state required from Him, as they are the most difficult to practise, so are they those which are universally useful. The virtues which belong to sovereign power and regal dignity a few only have occasion to exercise. The virtues of that station which He assumed are useful for all to acquire. 2. By His appearing in the humble, suffering state He teaches us how very insignificant in the sight of God, and in the eyes of true wisdom, are all the possessions of this world and all the flattering distinctions of a present state. 3. By appearing in a humble, suffering state He shows us that earthly distress is no proof of a bad character; that suffering is no sure intimation of God's displeasure at the sufferer. 4. By appearing in this state He shows us that it was only the force of truth that engaged and influenced His followers. So strongly are men impressed by the circumstances of high birth, of eminent rank, of great power, the splendid acts of a monarch or a conqueror, that wherever these are found they are eager to show deference and respect. But Jesus had none of these worldly attractions. (*R. Bogg, D.D.*) *The real character of the Messiah:*—I. As to THE OBJECTION, that Jesus was not the true Messiah, because He did not answer the universal expectation which the Jews had of His being a mighty temporal prince. Considering the natural temper of mankind, and how strongly addicted they are to their worldly interests, and how jealous of everything that thwarts and opposes them, we must allow it to be a prejudice not easy to overcome. It requires a greater zeal for the honour of God and religion than most men are possessed of, to adhere to truth when we are likely to be losers by it. Few there are that have resolution enough to abide by a religion in which they have been educated, when once it comes to be opposed by the secular powers, and the profession of it to be attended with nothing but poverty and affliction: how much more courage then, and firmness of mind, is necessary to make men enter into a religion newly set up, and that is attended with the like disadvantages? But can any one seriously think this excuse of any force? Let him urge it in its true light, and thus must he plead when arraigned at the tribunal of God for unbelief: "I would willingly have embraced the religion of Jesus Christ had it been made more suitable to my carnal inclinations and interests; had the rewards it promises been temporal instead of eternal, none should have more industriously and cheerfully sought after them; but when He told me that His 'kingdom was not of this world,' and that I could not follow Him without 'taking up the cross;' without losing, or being in danger of losing, everything that was valuable in life, nay, life itself, for His sake—my flesh trembled at the thought, and human nature directed me to take care of myself, and to run no hazards for the sake of religion." What sentence can such an one expect but this: "Thou hast preferred thy temporal to thy eternal interest, thou hast had thy reward on earth, and canst therefore expect no other in heaven"? But the Jew perhaps thinks he has somewhat further to say in behalf of his unbelief—that he was persuaded, from the predictions of the prophets, that the Messiah would really be, what the Gentiles might only wish Him to be, a temporal prince; and, finding Jesus not to be so, they thought it a good reason for rejecting Him. But was this (supposing it true) the only mark by which the Messiah was to be known? How often do we read of His sufferings and ill-usage in the world? Did anybody appear that answered the character of the Messiah, in any one instance, so exactly as Jesus did? The Jews made another objection against Him of much the same kind: that

He was brought up, and, as they supposed, born at Nazareth, in Galilee; a country much despised by the Jews, as if there was anything in the nature of the soil or air of the country that rendered the inhabitants of it less acceptable to God than they might otherwise be, and He could not, if He would, produce eminent and bright spirits out of the most obscure parts of the world. The Chaldees were an idolatrous people, and yet God made choice of Abraham, a man of that country, with whom to establish an everlasting covenant, and in whose seed to bless all the nations of the earth. The prophet Jonah, a type of Christ, was born at a place called Gath-hepher, a town of the tribe of Zebulon, in Galilee itself, though no prophet is said by the Jews to come from thence: and Isaiah moreover plainly declares to us, in the description he is giving of the universal joy and comfort that will be occasioned by the birth and kingdom of Christ, that "in Galilee of the nations" this shall be seen. "The people (says he) that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." So that this objection is as groundless as it is weak and foolish. II. APPLICATION to ourselves. 1. It greatly behoves us to take care that worldly interest and advantage be not the principal motive that engages us to perform our duty; lest, after the example of the Jews, we fall away from it, when that motive fails; lest, being disappointed of the hopes we had conceived from our attachment to religion and religious men, we become enemies instead of friends. 2. How hard it is for truth to prevail over the prejudices and settled notions of men. (*C. Moore, M.A.*) *Religion a weariness to the natural man:*—Putting aside for an instant the thought of the ingratitude and the sin which indifference to Christianity implies, let us, as far as we dare, view it merely as a matter of fact, after the manner of the text, and form a judgment on the probable consequences of it. 1. "Religion is a weariness;" alas! so feel even children before they can well express their meaning. Exceptions, of course, now and then occur. I am not forgetful of the peculiar character of children's minds: sensible objects first meet their observation; it is not wonderful that they should at first be inclined to limit their thoughts to things of sense. A distinct profession of faith, and a conscious maintenance of principle, may imply a strength and consistency of thought to which they are as yet unequal. Again, childhood is capricious, ardent, light-hearted; it cannot think deeply or long on any subject. Yet all this is not enough to account for the fact in question—why they should feel this distaste for the very subject of religion. 2. "Religion is a weariness." I will next take the case of young persons when they first enter into life. Is not religion associated in their minds with gloom and weariness? This is the point: that the feelings of our hearts on the subject of religion are different from the declared judgment of God; that we have a natural distaste for that which He has said is our chief good. 3. Let us pass to the more active occupations of life. The transactions of worldly business, speculations in trade, ambitious hopes, the pursuit of knowledge, the public occurrences of the day, these find a way directly to the heart; they rouse, they influence. The name of religion, on the other hand, is weak and impotent. 4. But this natural contrariety between man and his Maker is still more strikingly shown by the confessions of men of the world who have given some thought to the subject, and have viewed society with somewhat of a philosophical spirit. Such men treat the demands of religion with disrespect and negligence, on the ground of their being unnatural. The same remark may be made upon the notions which secretly prevail in certain quarters at the present day, concerning the unsuitableness of Christianity to an enlightened age. The literature of the day is weary of revealed religion. 5. That religion is in itself a weariness is seen even in the conduct of the better sort of persons, who really on the whole are under the influence of its spirit. So dull and uninviting is calm and practical religion, that religious persons are ever exposed to the temptation of looking out for excitements of one sort or other, to make it pleasurable to them. 6. Even the confirmed servants of Christ witness to the opposition which exists between their own nature and the demands of religion. Can we doubt that man's will runs contrary to God's will—that the view which the inspired Word takes of our present life, and of our destiny, does not satisfy us, as it rightly ought to do? That Christ hath no form nor comeliness in our eyes; and though we see Him, we see no desirable beauty in Him? "Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." If our hearts are by nature set on the world for its own sake, and the world is one day to pass away, what are they to be set on, what to delight in then? What are to be the pleasures of the soul in another life? Can they be the same as they are here? They cannot; Scripture tells us they cannot; the world passeth away—now what

is there left to love and enjoy through a long eternity? It is then plain enough, though Scripture said not a word on the subject, that if we would be happy in the world to come, we must make us new hearts, and begin to love the things we naturally do not love. "He hath no form nor comeliness," etc. It is not His loss that we love Him not, it is our loss. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *The love of beauty (in art)*:—Let us fix our thoughts on one example of that contrast which inspired prophecy and the life of Christ have agreed to reconcile. It is decisively expressed in the contradictory words of Zechariah and Isaiah: the former heralding the King of Sion as one whose beauty should surpass the utmost praise of human words or thoughts (Zech. ix. 7); the latter declaring that those who should see that self-same Christ should find in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. I would try to suggest something in regard to the actual fulfilment of both prophecies in the claims addressed to our sense of beauty, by the revelation of Christianity; believing that there is a deep meaning in that strange and blended force of stern restraint and irresistible charm which this sense has so often owned in the presence of the Crucified; and hoping to show that this too is an instinct of our human nature, which, if we suffer it to act in sincerity and truth, will find its rest for ever in the Person of its Redeemer. Let us, then, notice first that the prophecy of Isaiah is, if we take it alone and superficially, in accord with much that has been written or implied about the influence of Christianity upon the genius of Art. For we are sometimes told, and more often made to feel, that there is something irksome and hindering to the free appreciation and enjoyment of beauty, in those dogmas about the conditions and issues of human life, which are inseparable from the work of our Lord. In various ways it is suggested or proclaimed that Christianity has unduly and too long presumed to thrust its doctrines between the human soul and the beauty which is about it, and disturbed that free entrance into the pleasures of sight and sound, through which every energy might go out to find its satisfaction and its rapture. And so some have already returned to feed and foster their sense of beauty by the works and thoughts of those who lived before this tyrannous restraint was preached; others are looking forward to a time when Art may avail itself of the triumph of scepticism, and renounce all hindering allegiance and regard to the discredited formulæ of religion; while many more are conscious of a vague expectation that the life of passion henceforward will and should be freer and fuller than it has been: that hitherto we have been unnecessarily cautious and sober in our pleasures, and timidly patient of undue restrictions; but that now all is going to be much more passionate and unfettered and absorbing, and that, by the pursuit of Art for Art's sake, we enter into an earthly paradise, which has at length been relieved from certain gloomy and old-fashioned regulations, and in which it may now be hoped that our sense of beauty will be a law unto itself. And in this temper very many who little know the consistent significance of their choice are falling in with a course of life and thought which has, as a whole, turned away from the Cross of Jesus Christ: turned away to seek elsewhere the full desire of their eyes, because He hath, as He dies for us, no form nor comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. For in truth there is a challenge and a law with which Christianity must ever meet the lover of beauty as he goes out to seek by whatever way the gratification of this sense. The Church of Christ cannot, while she remembers His message, her Master, and her trust, consent to be dismissed from the sphere of taste, or let it be thought that she has no counsel for her sons, as they turn to those high and thrilling pleasures, no means or right of judging the tone and the ideals of contemporary Art. (*Ibid.*) *Christianity and the sensuous*:—We were going to throw ourselves without reserve into this or that enthusiasm of beauty, to steep our souls in the excitement of music, or poetry, or art, to forget all else in the engrossing delight of their eager sympathy, to lay aside every hindering thought, to trust the strong desire of our heart, and measure our interests by their intensity: and Christianity recalls us to ourselves. It sets before us, in the compass of a single life, the full expression of that deep and marring discord which has broken up the harmony of this world, and it urges us to seek within ourselves for the secret of the disturbance and misery. It shows us the Perfect Love rejected, Perfect Purity reviled, Perfect Holiness blasphemed, Perfect Mercy scorned; God coming to His own and His own receiving Him not; the righteous Judge condemned; the Lord of Life obedient unto death; and it says that the cause of this anomaly, the condition which made this the earthly life of the Incarnate Son of God, is to be found within our own souls; and we know that there is something there which seems at times as though it would crucify the Son of God

afresh: something which would distort our choice from the high and spiritual to the bestial and mean: something which has often made us cruel and unjust to other men, and contemptible to ourselves. And as before the Cross which mankind awarded to its Redeemer we feel the havoc and tumult which sin has brought upon the order and truthfulness of our inner life, we must surely hesitate before we say that no restraint shall rest upon our sense of beauty, that there is no need, whatever adversaries may be moving about us, to be sober and vigilant in the world of Art. But for those who humbly take the yoke upon them, who, as they turn to the manifold wealth of beauty, do not thrust away the knowledge of their own hearts and the thought of Him whose death alone has saved them, and whose strong grace alone sustains and shelters them—for those the best delights of Art and Nature appear in a new radiance of light and hope, and speak of such things as pass man's understanding. The moments of quickened and exalted life which music and painting stir within them, the controlling splendour of the sunset, the tender glory of the distant hills, the wonder of a pure and noble face—these no longer come as passing pleasures, flashing out of a dark background, which is only the gloomier when they are gone, half realized and little understood: for now all are linked and held together as consistent tokens of the same redeeming, sanctifying Love; they see the Hand, the pierced Hand, which holds the gift; they know the Love which fashioned and adorned it; they have read elsewhere the thought which is embodied in the outward beauty; for it is He who spared not His own Son who with Him freely gives them all things. And all that He gives them prophesy of Him. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's beauty:*—It was not a beauty of form, it was the beauty of expression. It was not the beauty of statuary, it was the beauty of life. It is the purpose of God to disappoint the senses. He has victimized the eyes, and the ears, and the hands of men. (*J. Parker, D.D.*). *No beauty in Christ:*—Look not on the pitcher, but on the liquor that is contained in in. (*J. Trapp.*) *Christ's meanness on earth no objection against, but confirmation of, Christianity:*—I. Show against unbelievers, that THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROPHECIES WHICH CONCERNED THE MESSIAH ARE A CONVINCING ARGUMENT OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. It is agreed on all hands that there can be no human or natural reason assigned for such future and remote events as have no visible or natural cause to produce them; but are of a contingent nature, and many times depend on the free choice and will of man; and therefore the prediction of such events must be supposed to proceed from some supernatural revelation. It is the argument whereby God proves Himself to be the Lord, and that there is no other Saviour beside (Isa. xliii. 11, 12). By the same reason, he proves the gods of the nations to be idols, and no gods (Isa. xli. 21, 22, 29). The prophecies of Scripture, which referred to the Messiah, were of things at such a distance, and of such a nature, that there could not be any probable reason assigned, or tolerable conjecture made of them. And yet there was not one tittle of all the prophecies which relate to the manner or design of Christ's appearance in the world that fell to the ground. II. Show against the Jews, that THE MEAN APPEARANCE OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD IS NO GOOD ARGUMENT AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, OR OF ANY FORCE TO PROVE THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS NOT THE CHRIST; and that upon the two following accounts—1. As the grounds upon which the Jews expected a temporal Messiah, were false and impracticable; false with respect to the spirituality of His kingdom; impracticable with respect to the extent and universality of its blessings and privileges. 2. As the state and condition of life which our Saviour chose in the world was most agreeable to the great ends and design of His coming into it. (1) It gave a strong confirmation to the truth of that holy religion which He came to plant in the world. Had our Saviour been a victorious prince, that had given laws to the world, and backed the authority of them with the sword, the atheist might then have pretended, that the Christian, as well as other religions in the world, was the daughter of force, and a mere politic invention, contrived by its Author the better to settle and confirm His government to Him, if He should find a favourable juncture to possess Himself of it. But now the effects of the Christian religion on the minds of men, and the methods of propagating it, cannot be ascribed to any human power or authority. Instead of employing the secular arm to compel men to come into the Church, God put a sceptre of righteousness into the hands of Christ: He authorized Him to give such a body of holy and righteous laws to His Church as might be proper to work upon their minds by the gentle methods of reason and persuasion. He made choice of such for His companions and disciples as were men of mean occupations and low fortunes; men as to their natural capacities no ways qualified

for so difficult and high an undertaking as the establishing a new religion against the settled laws and powers, the prejudices and passions, the vanities and vices of a corrupt world. The design of the holy Jesus in all this was to show that the excellency of the power which attended Himself and His apostles, in preaching the doctrine of salvation, might not be ascribed unto men, but unto God. He would make way for the reception and establishment of the Gospel in the world by no other means but by the evidence of its truth, the excellency of its morals, the number of the miracles wrought to confirm it, and the simplicity of those who were the first preachers and promoters of it. And, indeed, that the Christian religion, by such mean and unlikely instruments, should in so short a time extend itself so wide, and that they should reap such a harvest of triumphs over so many enemies, seems to have been the greatest miracle of all. (2) The state and condition of life which our Saviour chose in the world was also a wise and excellent method to recommend the practice of religion to it. The holy Jesus did not think it enough to reveal the will of God to mankind; this He might have done, as God delivered the law in the Mount, by speaking to some extraordinary prophet, and committing what He spoke to a standing writing, without rendering Himself visible. But God gave Him a body, that men might from His own mouth hear the words of eternal life. (3) The circumstances wherein our Saviour made His appearance in the world were most agreeable to His design of becoming a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the world: for though our redemption is attributed more especially to His sufferings and death upon the Cross, as His sacrifice was there finished, yet we ought to look upon it as begun as soon as he was born into the world. III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. If the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning our Saviour be an evident proof of His being the great Prophet that was to come into the world, then whatever doctrines He taught are certainly true and Divinely revealed. 2. From the circumstances of our Saviour's appearance in the world let us learn the duties of patience, charity and humility. 3. In order to humble the pride of our hearts, when we are tempted to bear ourselves high upon any worldly advantages, which give us a superiority above our brethren, let us consider how Jesus Christ, the best and wisest, judged of these things. (*R. Fiddes*). *Christ uncomely and yet beautiful*:—How can it be said of Christ that He had neither comeliness nor beauty, since it is said (Ps. xlv. 2), that "He is fairer than the children of men," or "than the sons of Adam"? And in Cant. v. 10–16 He is described by the spouse to be well-coloured, and likewise well-featured, and she goeth on from part to part, from head to feet; and then concludeth, "He is altogether lovely." To this I answer—1. It is one thing what Christ is to the spouse, another what He is to the unbelieving Jews. Christ's beauties are inward, seen of none but those that are inwardly acquainted with Him. The spouse speaketh of Him in a spiritual sense. 2. We must distinguish between Christ's humiliation and exaltation, His Godhead and His manhood. In His Godhead He is "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," and consequently full of beauty. In His humiliation He is not only a man, but a mean man (Phil. ii. 9). 3. In Christ's humiliation we must distinguish as to what He is in Himself and as to what He is in the eye of the world. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The mean not necessarily despicable*:—Do not despise things for their meanness, for so thou mayest condemn the ways of God. (*Ibid.*) *God's use of the mean*:—As there was meanness in the outward habitude of Christ's person, so there is now in the administration of His kingdom; as appears by considering—1. That the ordinances are weak to appearance; there is nothing but plain words, plain bread and wine, in one ordinance, and only water in another. The simple plainness of the ordinances is an obstacle to men's believing; they would fain bring in pomp, but that will mar all. 2. These ordinances are administered by weak men. Our Saviour sent fishermen to conquer the world, and made use of a goose-quill to wound Antichrist. Moses, the stammering shepherd, was commissioned to deliver Israel; God makes use of Amos, who was a herdsman, to declare His will. So Elisha the great prophet was taken from the plough. And many times God made use of young men, such as Paul, whose very person causeth prejudice; young Samuel, young Timothy, men of mean descent, low parentage, and of no great appearance in the world. 3. The manner how it is by them managed, which is not in such a politic, insinuating way as to beguile and deceive, and as if they were to serve their own ends (2 Cor. i. 12). 4. The persons by whom it is entertained, the poor (James ii. 5). Usually God's true people are the meanest, not being so noted for outward excellency as others. This has been always a great prejudice against Christ's doctrine (John vii.

48). 5. The general drift of it is to make men deny their pleasures, to overlook their concernments, to despise the world, to hinder unjust gain, to walk contrary to the ordinary customs and fashions of the world. (*Ibid.*) *Christ assumed an appearance of meanness:*—This meanness of Christ was willingly taken up by Him. 1. In His birth. (1) For the time of it. It was when the royal stock of David was come so low that Joseph was but a carpenter by profession. Therefore is the genealogy of Joseph and Mary so carefully sought out by the evangelist, because it was not commonly and publicly known that they were of that lineage. The throne of David was occupied by Herod, who was an Ascalonite. (2) The place, Bethlehem, a small place. Then He was not born in any stately room, but in a manger in the stable. (3) Consider how in everything He was found in shape like another child, being circumcised the eighth day. (4) Consider the oblation that was made for Him, such as was made for poor people. Yet we may observe there was something Divine still mingled with Christ's outward meanness, as the appearing of the star, the trouble of the Jews, the wise men's report and offerings. By these things God would leave them without excuse, and under this poverty discover some glimpses of the Deity. 2. In His life and manner of appearance in the world. He was altogether found in fashion as a man; to outward appearance just as other men, for His growth was as other men's, by degrees: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." His life was spent in much toil and labour, etc. (*Ibid.*) *Poverty:*—1. Poverty and meanness are not disgraceful. Christ Himself was a carpenter, Paul a tent-maker, and the apostles fishermen. Christ, you see, scorned that glory, pomp and greatness which the world doteth upon. 2. Poverty should not be irksome to us. Christ underwent it before you; His apostles were base in the world's eye (1 Cor. iv. 13). Poverty is a great burden, and layeth a man open to many a disadvantage—scorn, contempt and refusal. But consider, Christ hath honoured it in His own person, and He honoureth it to this very day. (*Ibid.*) *Missing Christ's beauty:*—There have been two traditions respecting Christ's person. Some of the Fathers of the Church have declared that He was Divinely beautiful, "the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." Others have spoken of Him in the words of Isaiah, "He hath no form nor comeliness." For my own part I like to think of Him as Divinely beautiful. If in all things He is to have the pre-eminence, why not here as well as there? Certain it is that there must have shone through Him some transfiguring splendour, that awed and fascinated. Men were conquered as much by His look as by His word. If, however, these descriptions of Isaiah refer to His person, and are to be taken literally, then they are very far from being attractive. "As a root out of a dry ground." "He hath no form nor comeliness." "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." "We esteemed Him not," or, as Luther translates, "We thought Him nothing." The picture seems to be that of a mean and miserable life, tragic, unsettled, menaced, lined with grief, disfigured with wounds. I say "seems." For, after all, the fault may not be so much in Him as in us. Beauty may be all about men, yet they may never perceive it, because their foolish hearts are darkened; because they are short-sighted, blind, impure. Ruskin's dictum is that joy, affection, veneration are necessary to the beholding of beauty. If that be so, and men know nothing of "the joy that rises in one like a summer's morn;" if they have never experienced the "love that greatens and glorifies all things;" if they know nothing of that reverence which recognizes and bows before the highest, it is no wonder that they miss the spirit of the beautiful. Men may have missed Christ's beauty from many causes, as men are missing it to-day. Let us seek to discover what these things are that blind us to the holiest, the highest, the loveliest. I. THE SPIRIT OF CONTEMPT BLINDS TO BEAUTY. Jesus came into this world a Galilean peasant, poor, obscure, straitened in every way. And judging Him by the measure of the scale on which He appeared, men treated Him with disdain, contempt, scorn, remarking, "Is not this the carpenter?" How many there are who live continually in the spirit of contempt. They continually look down. They seem to forget that some of the choicest spirits of earth have dined on "homely fare" and worn "hodden grey," and that the millionaires of ideas have frequently been bankrupts in pocket. How contemptuously the great spirits of the world have been treated by those who were not worthy to unloose their shoe-latchets! Think of Mozart being sent by an archbishop in whose retinue he was to dine with the servants in the kitchen. Think of that same Mozart occupying a nameless grave, for "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." "Odd world, is it not, that will send its Bunyans to prison and give its jockeys ten thousand a year!" Aristotle paints his magnanimous

man as "not apt to admire, for to him there is nothing great." What a number of these magnanimous men there must be; men so held in the grip of contempt that, standing in a world crammed full of the rich glories of creation, they see nothing to admire. Now contempt springs from two things: lack of understanding and lack of love. The wise man never despises. "God is great, yet He despiseth not any," and those who are great after the greatness of God have ever felt their smallness beside the humblest and poorest of men. They see that behind the dullest life there may be angelic light. Where true wisdom is there contempt is not. Charles V. was truly great when, picking up the brush of Titian which the painter had dropped, he remarked that he was "proud to wait on so supreme a genius." Men see no beauty in Christ because they have been too ready to despise Him. Contempt springs from lack of love. "They thought Him nothing" because they never looked at Him with the heart. If you want to discover all that is brightest and best in men you must look at them with the look of love; then will God become "aglow to the loving heart in what was mere earth before." Love is wonderful always. There is a magic power about it which can make plain faces shine as the faces of angels. It can fill with light and radiance a cottage home as no gold can do. It can convert worthless trifles into precious heirlooms. So if men would only look at Christ with the supreme look of the soul they would discover that He who seems to have no form nor comeliness will then be crowned with glory and honour. II. MEN MISS THE BEAUTY, TOO, BY THE CRITICAL TEMPER. Some men there are who start out always with a disposition to criticize rather than to admire. When a young lady once expressed the wish to Hogarth that she might be able to draw caricature, the great satirist replied, "It is not a faculty to be envied; take my advice and never draw caricature. By the long practice of it I have lost the enjoyment of beauty. I never see a face but distorted, and have never the satisfaction to behold the human face divine." The great caricaturist had so accustomed himself to look for faults that he could see nothing else. Criticism blinds to beauty. Was not that true with regard to Christ? Look for the beauty in Him and you will discover a loveliness that cannot be chiselled in marble or expressed in colour, but a beauty which, when the soul sees it is ravished for ever, and rapt into an ecstasy of admiration and love. III. WE MAY MISS THE BEAUTY THROUGH ENVY. Did not men miss His beauty in that way in the days of His flesh? Pilate was keen enough to perceive that behind the seeming air of justice assumed by His traducers the fires of envy burned. "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him." The artist who portrayed Envy as a man of mean and misshapen figure, with crouching shoulder, craning neck, distended ears, and serpent tongue, was endowed with a more than ordinary gift of insight. Where envy exists there can be no vision of the beautiful. For it blinds the mind and poisons the heart, and lifts not to a throne, but to a cross. How it blinded the eyes of those Scribes and Pharisees! They saw the beautiful deeds of the Man, how He succoured the weak, the suffering, the sad; they heard His words, fragrant, uplifting, strengthening; they beheld a life spent in doing good; yet so blinded were they by the spirit of envy that this supreme vision of loveliness did not dawn upon them. The penalty of envy is blindness, and until those scales fall from the eyes, all things true and beautiful and of good report, everything of worth in the character and conduct of our fellow-men, all the charm and sweetness of the Son of Man, will remain undiscovered by us. IV. PREOCCUPATION MAY BLIND TO BEAUTY. Men are so feverishly busy in these days, they live at such express speed, that they often miss the angel at the door. When men are busy here and there they miss the charms of the Eternal. A little more quiet, a little abiding in one's own room, and it would be discovered that Christ is lovelier than painter's sublimest dream, and that finding Him one finds a joy for ever. (*Cecil H. Wright.*)

Vers. 3–7. **He is despised and rejected of men.**—*The mean appearance of the Redeemer foretold:*—I. THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD IN DETERMINING TO SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD IN A STATE OF POVERTY AND AFFLICTION. 1. With regard to His being a teacher, His sufferings set Him above the reach of suspicions. What ends could He have to serve by His doctrine, who met with nothing but misery and affliction, as the reward of His labour? 2. With regard to our Lord's being an example of holiness and obedience set before us for our instruction and imitation. His sufferings render the pattern perfect, and show His virtues in their truest lustre, and at the same time silence the pleas which laziness or self-love would otherwise have suggested. 3. With regard to His Divine mission. His sufferings were an evident token that the hand of God was with Him. He only can produce

strength out of weakness, and knows how to confound the mighty things of the world by things which are of no account. Add to this the evidence of prophecy, which is so much the stronger by how much the weaker Christ was: so admirably has the wisdom of God displayed itself in this mystery of faith. II. THE EVIDENCE OF PROPHECY CONCERNING THE MEAN APPEARANCE OUR LORD WAS TO MAKE. III. THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE WE HAVE FOR THE COMPLETION OF THESE PROPHECIES. (*T. Sherlock, D.D.*) *Christ despised and rejected of men*:—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS IT MAY STILL BE SAID THAT CHRIST IS DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN. 1. Men may be said to despise Christ when they do not receive Him as their alone Saviour, the true and only way to the Father. 2. When they practically deny His authority by breaking His Commandments. 3. When they do not give Him the chief room in their hearts, nor prefer Him in their choice to everything else. 4. When they do not publicly confess Him before men. II. THE CAUSES OF THIS CONTEMPT. 1. The main cause is a secret unbelief. 2. Love of this would. 3. Ignorance of their own condition. 4. An opinion that they may obtain His aid at what time soever they shall choose to ask it. III. THE MALIGNITY OF THIS SIN. To despise and reject such a Saviour, is the blackest ingratitude that can possibly be imagined. 2. Your ingratitude is heightened by the most insolent contempt both of the wisdom and goodness of God. 3. By despising and rejecting Christ, you openly proclaim war against the Most High, and bid Him defiance. (*R. Walker.*) *Despised and rejected*:—I. CHRIST WAS AN OBJECT OF SCORN AND CONTEMPT. 1. He was despised as an impostor. 2. Despised in His teachings. 3. In his work. 4. In His claims to a righteous judgment at the national tribunal. II. NOT ONLY WAS JESUS AN OBJECT OF CONTEMPT AND SCORN BUT OF ABSOLUTE REJECTION. If the word had read "neglected,"—deserted, coldly passed by—this would have revealed an indifference that would have covered His nation and age with reproach, and would have stood out a lasting monument of their base ingratitude. But here is a word conveying the idea of the most inveterate and active hatred. But why this active hostility to Christ? (*J. Higgins.*) *Despised and rejected of men*:—In the Gospel we see this rejection in actual occurrence. I. HE WAS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY THE WORLDLY-MINDED (John vi.). Following Christ for the sake of bread may lead to much enthusiastic and self-denying exertion. Here, the very meanest view of Christ is preferred to those lofty and spiritual truths by which He tried to allure and save their souls. In his presence, before His face, while listening to His voice, and with the splendour of the miracle before them—all are passed by for the bread. Is not this the essence of worldly-mindedness? Christianity is the religion of many, not for the sake of the Lord Himself, nor His gracious words, nor even His miracles, but for the bread, for reputation's sake, and social character and respectability. II. HE WAS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY THE RATIONALIST (Matt. xiii. 54–57). It was in "His own country." There men thought they knew Him; His family had long dwelt there. Parents, brothers, sisters were all familiarly known—all, down to their very trade: "Is not this the carpenter?" The facts of the case, as the rationalist is so fond of saying, were all clearly apprehended, and stood forth in their true dimensions. "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" Is it real? is it not on the face of it absurd, this mere carpenter's son? This is the inmost spirit of rationalism. It rejects everything above the level of visible and tangible fact, everything that cannot be weighed and measured, everything spiritual in Scripture doctrine and supernatural in Scripture history. III. HE IS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY THE ECCLESIASTIC (Matt. xxi. 15–23). The ecclesiastical temper is not found solely or chiefly amongst those who are ecclesiastics by profession. The religious spirit may be crushed—indeed, has often been; rigid and severe forms may take the place of the easy and graceful motions of vital Christianity. This is the rejection of Christ in the freedom by which His Holy Spirit "distributes to every man severally as He will." IV. HE IS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY MEN OF BRUTE FORCE (Luke xxiii. 11). To some the tenderness of the Gospel religion is an offence. Humanity is a peculiarly Christian virtue, and meekness and resignation. The calm tranquillity of meditation, the tearful eye of compassion, the sublime courage of patience, the daring heroism of forgiveness, excite no sympathy or admiration in some breasts. Theirs is the rejection of Christ through a false manliness. V. CHRIST IS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY HIS OWN (John i. 11). Some, from a natural sweetness and amiability of disposition, seem in a certain degree adapted to be Christians. The restraining effects of home discipline and generous education have restrained them from open transgression. Yet their rejection of Christ as a Saviour from sin is often most decided and even

disdainful. They think the charge of sin inappropriate, for they have no consciousness of it, and no felt need of a Saviour. The sinfulness of rejecting Christ is seen in its being a rejection of the Father (Luke x. 16). It is not possible to reject Christ, and be right with God. (*S. H. Tindall.*) *Failure*:—In a life that is lived with the thoughts of eternity, in one aspect failure is inevitable: in another aspect failure is impossible. 1. Failure is inevitable. If I accept for myself an ideal which is beyond the limits of here and now, then manifestly it is impossible that I can here and now realize it. There must be always with me, so long as I am faithful to that ideal, a sense of incompleteness, a ceaseless aspiration, an effort that only the grave can close. He knows if he is faithful that he has before him an eternal career, that the end to which he is moving is likeness to Jesus Christ; that he has to pass into the unveiled presence of God and hold communion with Him. If that be the end, can it be otherwise than that, in the meanwhile, there should be failure, humiliation, penitence, and ceaseless and unwearied discipline of self? 2. Failure, in another aspect, is impossible. Only be sure that deep down at the root of life there is loyalty to God, and then begin where we are placed—in the effort to find Him He will fulfil the search. The miracle of the failure of Calvary is our assurance of that truth. It is this living for the Eternal, as a venture of faith, which has always appealed to the eternal God, which His own nature is pledged to meet. Do we stumble? It is only that we may realize His readiness to help. Are we bewildered? It is only in order that we may find how sure He guides. Are we humiliated by our confessions? It is only that we may realize the readiness of His pardon. Are we conscious and stricken with the sense of our weakness? It is only that we may find His strength perfected within us. If we have only taken sides with Him in the great issues of human life, then He will justify our choice. (*C. G. Lang.*) *Failure may be welcomed*:—Our failure in the light of the Cross, our spiritual failures, are things to be welcomed; they prevent the torpor of dull assurance creeping over us like a poison; they prevent our falling under imperfect standards of life, they prove, so long as they are constant with us, that the energy of the Spirit of God has not left us to ourselves; they witness to us that we recognize the truth that our souls can find their rest and satisfaction only in God. (*Ibid.*) *The despised Saviour*:—To all God grants some dim vision of what He intends man to be. The holiest men have had the clearest glimpses of that character. One nation was separated to keep the ideal before the world. The majority corrupted the representation, but some prophets saw it clearly. I. GOD'S IDEAL FOR MAN, AND ITS REALIZATION IN CHRIST. The majority thought He would be another Solomon, David's greater son. The prophet saw that He would be a Sinless Sufferer; what it had been intended that the nation should be, that the Suffering Servant would be. The voice of God, which set forth the ideal by the lips of prophets, now speaks through our own highest desires. II. THE WORLD'S RECEPTION OF THE REVEALED IDEAL. Pilate has brought Him forth that His suffering may excite their pity, but His pure and loving life has made them relentless in their hate. There is no beauty that they should desire Him. Barabbas, the bold and reckless, is the people's choice. While boon companions crowd round him, cold looks and scornful smiles are reserved for Christ. Christ had headed no revolt against the powers that be, and therefore He was not popular. Political emancipation is more popular than spiritual. The path of righteousness ends on Calvary; its crown is one of thorns, its throne a cross. III. THE MEANING OF THE REVELATION OF THIS IDEAL. The world says, Blessed are the wealthy, the powerful, the great, and the wise. Christ says, Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the meek, the mourners, the persecuted. At first we pity Christ, and reserve our indignation for His persecutors. But He was the least pitiable of all that group. Pilate was a pitiable victim, the people were pitiable because carried away by passion, and the priests by desire for revenge. The greatness of apparent weakness is here revealed. Yet we despise weakness. Here is a dramatic representation of weighty decisions made every day in human hearts. When we choose ease and worldly glory in preference to holiness and self-denial, we despise and reject Christ. Here our choice is seen worked out to the bitter end. This is a revelation of the meaning of sin. IV. THE EFFECT OF THIS REVELATION. The world can never forget that spectacle. In the dark ages, when the Bible was a hidden book, a representation of this scene was to be found in every church. Though obscured by superstition, the ideal was still held up, and was still moulding the minds and stimulating the holy endeavours of men. In an open Bible we have the ideal more truthfully set forth. The love there revealed has been the constraining motive which moved apostles to preach, martyrs to suffer, missionaries

to forgo the joys of home, and humble men and women to labour in countless ways to advance the interests of Christ. His patience shames our murmuring: His burning love to us kindles our love to Him. (*R. C. Ford, M.A.*) *The world's regard for the outward*:—The great cause assigned by the prophet for the astonishment of men at the Messiah and for their rejection of Him is, that His real glory is hidden beneath humiliation and sorrow. The world, that is, which always looks at the outward appearance of things, judges them according to their material splendours; having a carnal eye, it can but dimly discern moral beauty. It renders homage to thrones and crowns, and wealth and power, and does not care to see the moral iniquity and the spiritual repulsiveness there may be behind them; it feels pity and contempt for suffering and poverty and obloquy, and does not care to see the moral grandeur that these may cover or indicate. There are few of us so reverent to a poor, godly man, as to a rich godless one. We may not refuse to utter words commending the one and condemning the other, but we utter them very tenderly; the goodness of a rich man causes us to exhaust our expletives, and almost ourselves, in admiring praise; the wickedness of a poor man is denounced by us without mercy; but when the conditions are reversed we have a great deal more reserve. Our praise is a concession that we cannot withhold. We blame "with bated breath, and whispering humbleness." The ragged garments of poverty have a wonderful transparency when vice lies behind them; while riches usurp the powers of charity, and "hide the multitude of sins." (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The art of seeing the spiritual*:—The Jews did not look for spiritual meaning in their dispensation, but simply at material and mechanical ordinances, and they became Pharisees—regarding religion as a thing of phylacteries and tithes and street prayers: they did not look for spiritual glory in their expected Messiah, or for spiritual blessings in His coming, and they became absorbed in the conception of a temporal prince, and were incapable of seeing anything else in Him; and, because He was not this, in their astonishment and anger, they rejected and crucified Him. The lesson is a universal one; it affects the spiritual education of every soul, our own daily habits of interpreting things. We may look at God's world until we see nothing of God's presence in it; nothing but mechanical forces. A scientific or philosophical eye may soon educate itself to see nothing but science and philosophy; a material eye, to see nothing but materialism. We may look upon creation, and see no Creator; upon providence, and see no Benefactor. So we may read the Bible, and see nothing but sacred history, or scientific philosophy—the letter and not the spirit. So we may look at Christian things on their material rather than their spiritual side. We may speculate upon a millennium coming of Christ, until we forget His spiritual presence—even upon heaven itself, until we forget the inward grace, and holiness and Divine communion that chiefly make it heaven. Let us carefully cultivate the Divine art of seeing spiritual aspects and meanings in all things, of judging of all things by their spiritual importance, of valuing them for their spiritual influence, of applying them to spiritual uses. "The pure in heart see God;" "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." (*Ibid.*) *Christ rejected*:—I. The first reason assigned for the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews was THE GRADUAL AND UNOSTENTATIOUS MANNER OF HIS MANIFESTATION. "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," etc. The general reference is, no doubt, to His parentage, and His manner of entering the world—so contrasted with the probable expectations of the Jews. Not like a cedar of Lebanon did the world's Messiah appear; not as a scion of a noble and wealthy house; not as the son of a Herod or a Caiaphas—but as a "tender plant," as "a root out of a dry ground." It is a repetition of the figure in the eleventh chapter, "There shall come forth a Shoot out of the stem of Jesse; and a Scion shall spring forth from his roots." Just as the descendants of the Plantagenets are to be found amongst our English peasantry, the glory of the family had departed. Nothing could be farther from the thought of the carnal Jews than that Messiah the Prince should be a scion of such a forgotten house. How wonderful in its obscurity and helplessness was His childhood; not hastening towards His manifestation, not hastening even towards His ministry to the perishing, but waiting until "the fulness of time was come;" growing into the child, the youth, the man; for more than thirty years giving scarcely a sign that He was other than an ordinary son of humanity; at first helplessly dependent upon His parents for support and direction, then obediently "subject to them," fulfilling all the conditions and duties of childhood, a child with children as well as a man with men; then a youth labouring as an artisan, fulfilling His great mission to the world in a carpenter's shop. And then fulfilling His ministry, not amongst the

rich, but amongst the poor; not in acts of rule and conquest, but in deeds of beneficence and words of spiritual life; and consummating it by a death on a cross. II. The second reason for the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, which the prophet assigns, is HIS UNATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE WHEN MANIFESTED. This he puts both negatively and positively. 1. Negatively, He was destitute of all attractions; He had "no form nor comeliness;" He was without "beauty" to make men "desire Him." 2. But there were positive repulsions; everything to offend men who had such prepossessions as they had. A Messiah in the guise of a peasant babe—the Divine in the form of a servant and a sufferer. Chiefly, however, we are arrested by the phrase, which, because of its touching beauty, has almost become one of the personal designations of the Messiah—"A Man of sorrows"—literally, a Man of sufferings, or of *many* sufferings—One who possesses sufferings as other men possess intelligence, or physical faculty—One who was "acquainted with grief," not in the casual, transient way in which most men are, but with an intimacy as of companionship; the utmost bodily and mental sorrow was endured by Him. The emphasis of the description lies not in the fact that one who came to be a Prophet and Reformer was subjected to martyr treatment, for such men have ever been rejected and persecuted by the ignorance, envy and madness of their generation. It is that He who was the Creator and Lord of all things should have submitted to this condition, borne this obloquy, endured this suffering; that the Lord of life and blessedness should appear in our world, not only as a Man, but as so suffering a Man, as that He should be known amongst other suffering men as pre-eminently "a Man of sorrows"—a Man whose sorrows were greater than other men's sorrows. Now, we cannot think that this designation is given to Him merely because of the bodily sufferings, or social provocations, that were inflicted upon Him. We shall touch but very distantly the true heart of the Redeemer's sorrows, if we limit the cause of them to the mere stubbornness of His generation, or to the mere physical agonies of His death. It is doing no wrong to the pre-eminence of the Saviour's agonies to say, that many teachers of truth have been opposed and persecuted more than He was, and that many martyrs have endured deaths of more terrible physical agony. If this were all, we should be compelled, I think, to admit that the prophetic description is somewhat exaggerated. How, then, is it to be accounted for? Only by the fact of His having also endured transcendent inward sorrow; sorrow of mind, sorrow of heart, of which ordinary men have no experience; only by His own strange expression in His agony, when no human hand touched Him—"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Then comes the mystery of such a pure and perfect soul experiencing such a sorrow. If He were only a prophet and martyr for the truth of God, why, as distinguished from all other prophets and martyrs, should He have endured so much inward anguish? Here we touch the great mystery of atonement, and we are bold to say that this alone interprets Christ's peculiar sorrow. (*Ibid.*) *Lessons from the manner of Christ's appearing:*—1. Great things may be found in very lowly forms. We judge of things by material magnitudes; the spiritual God judges them by moral qualities. The great forces that have ruled the world have mostly been born in lowly places; they have been moulded to greatness in the school of necessity; trained to greatness in the school of endurance. He who has not to endure can never be great. Let us cultivate the spiritual eye, that can recognize spiritual qualities everywhere, and neither in others nor in ourselves disparage "the day of small things," the germs of virtue and strength; for we know not what they may achieve. The acorn becomes an oak; the "solitary monk shakes the world;" the Babe of Bethlehem becomes the Christ of Christianity. Your solitary scholar may be the nucleus of a great system of education; your solitary convert may evangelize a nation (Matt. xiii. 31–32). 2. The power of Divine patience. God waits, even in His great redeeming purpose, until "the fulness of time is come," and then until the "tender plant grows up before Him." We, in our impatience, wish to do all things at once, to convert the world in a day. Our zeal becomes fanaticism the more difficult to check because it takes so holy a form. (*Ibid.*) *Aversion to Christ:*—The reason for this aversion to Christ may probably be found in the fact of—1. His sorrowful face. 2. His serious manner. 3. His spiritual teaching. 4. His consecration to His Father's business. 5. His single walk with God, His habits of retirement and prayer. Men hate and reject Christ for these characteristics. The world's spirit and all worldly religion resent these aspects of spiritual life. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *Handel's "Messiah":*—Of Handel, it is said, that when composing his "Messiah," and he came to these words, he was affected to tears; and well might he weep, for history furnishes no parallel to this case. (*J. Higgins.*)

A man of sorrows.—*The causes of Christ's sorrows:*—I. THE DAILY CONTACT OF HIS PURE AND PIOUS SOUL WITH SINFUL AND SINNING MEN. And who may conceive the constancy and intensity of the anguish that would spring from this? There would be the sense of human relationship to a race that had sinned and fallen; they were men, and He was a Man too: "He likewise took part of the same;" they were His proper brothers; He was allied in blood to men so guilty and degraded. It was as if a vicious brother, a prodigal son, were guilty of nameless and constant crime. The sense of men's guilt, degradation, misery, ingratitude, would bow down His pure soul with unspeakable sorrow and shame. Then there was His daily practical contact with acts and hearts of sin; the touch on every side, and wherever He felt humanity, of what was unloving and unholy; the sight of their hate to His loving Father; of their rebelliousness against His holy law; a sinfulness and unspiritualness that led them to reject and hate Him; to turn away with dislike and determination from His holy words and deeds. His great human love, His perfect human holiness, would wonderfully combine to wring His soul with anguish. The apostle intimates how great this sorrow was, when he says that "He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself;" that He "resisted unto blood, striving against sin." And we can understand the mysterious agony of His soul in Gethsemane only by supposing that it was the sense of the world's guilt that lay upon it: that made His soul so exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. We have only to think of His pure nature; that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" and to remember the men that He came into contact with; the world in which He lived; the treatment which His message of holiness and mercy received: to understand how sore the sorrow of His soul would be. II. THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL. He, the pure and perfect Son of the Father, was doomed to listen to polluting and hateful thoughts of distrust and sin: He who so loathed evil was plied with evil. III. THE GREAT BUT INEXPLICABLE SORROW OF WHATEVER CONSTITUTED HIS ATONEMENT—of whatever is meant by its "pleasing the Father to bruise Him"—to "put Him to grief"—to "make His soul an offering for sin"—to "lay upon Him the iniquity of us all"—to "forsake Him" on His cross. These were the chief elements of His sorrow—a sorrow that has had no equal, and that, in many of its ingredients, has had no likeness. (*H. Allon, D.D.*)—*Christ a Man of sorrows:*—I. IT IS HERE PREDICTED THAT CHRIST SHOULD BE A MAN OF SORROWS, and acquainted with grief. This prediction was literally fulfilled. It has been supposed that His sufferings were rather apparent than real; or, at least, that His abundant consolations, and His knowledge of the happy consequences which would result from His death, rendered His sorrows comparatively light, and almost converted them to joys. But never was supposition more erroneous. His sufferings were incomparably greater than they appeared to be. No finite mind can conceive of their extent. His sufferings began with his birth, and ended but with His life. 1. It must have been exceedingly painful to such a person as Christ to live in a world like this. 2. Another circumstance which contributed to render our Saviour a Man of sorrows was the reception He met with from those He came to save. 3. Another circumstance that threw a shade of gloom over our Saviour's life was His clear view and constant anticipation of the dreadful agonies in which it was to terminate. He was not ignorant, as we happily are, of the miseries which were before Him. How deeply the prospect affected Him is evident from His own language: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" II. We have in this prophetic passage AN ACCOUNT OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CONDUCT UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THESE SORROWS. "He was oppressed," etc. "He was brought as a Lamb," etc. Never was language more descriptive of the most perfect meekness and patience; never was prediction more fully justified by the event than in the case before us. If His lips were opened, it was but to express the most perfect submission to His Father's will, and to breathe out prayers for His murderers. Christian, look at your Master, and learn how to suffer. Sinner, look at your Saviour, and learn to admire, to imitate, and to forgive. But why is this patient, innocent Sufferer thus afflicted? "He was wounded for our transgressions," etc. III. Our text describes THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST WAS TREATED when He thus came as a Man of sorrows to atone for our sins. "Despised and rejected of men." "We hid, as it were, our faces," etc. He has long since ascended to heaven, and therefore cannot be the immediate object of men's attacks. But His Gospel and His servants are still in the world; and the manner in which they are treated is sufficient evidence that the feelings of the natural heart toward Christ are not materially different from those of the

Jews. His servants are hated, ridiculed and despised, His Gospel is rejected, and His institutions slighted. Every man who voluntarily neglects to confess Christ before men, and to commemorate His dying love, must say, either that He does not choose to do it, or that he is not prepared to do it. If a man says, I do not choose to confess Christ, he certainly rejects Him. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The human race typified by the Man of sorrows:*—I. THE LOT OF HUMANITY IN THIS WORLD. This is the portrait of the species—"A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." II. THE TREATMENT WHICH DEPRESSED HUMANITY COMMONLY EXPERIENCES: "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him." (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The Man of sorrows:*—I. "A MAN." He who was God, and was in the beginning with God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Remembering that Jesus Christ is God, it behoves us to recollect that His manhood was none the less real and substantial. It differed from our own humanity in the absence of sin, but in no other respect. This condescending participation in our nature brings the Lord Jesus very near to us in relationship. Inasmuch as He was man, though also God, He was, according to Hebrew law, our *goel*—our kinsman, next of kin. Now it was according to the law that if an inheritance had been lost, it was the right of the next kin to redeem it. Our Lord Jesus exercised His legal right, and seeing us sold into bondage and our inheritance taken from us, came forward to redeem both us and all our lost estate. Be thankful that you have not to go to God at the first, and as you are, but you are invited to come to Jesus Christ, and through Him to the Father. Then let me add, that every child of God ought also to be comforted by the fact that our Redeemer is one of our own race, seeing that He was made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest; and He was tempted in all points, like as we are, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. The sympathy of Jesus is the next most precious thing to His sacrifice. II. "A MAN OF SORROWS." The expression is intended to be very emphatic; it is not "a sorrowful man," but "a Man of sorrows," as if He were made up of sorrows, and they were constituent elements of His being. Some are men of pleasure, others men of wealth, but He was "a Man of sorrows." He and sorrow might have changed names. He who saw Him, saw sorrow, and he who would see sorrow, must look on Him. "Behold, and see," saith He, "if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow which was done unto Me." 1. Our Lord is called the Man of sorrows for peculiarity, for this was His peculiar token and special mark. We might well call Him "a man of holiness;" for there was no fault in Him: or a man of labours, for He did His Father's business earnestly; or "a man of eloquence," for never man spake like this man. We might right fittingly call Him "The man of love," for never was there greater love than glowed in His heart. Still, conspicuous as all these and many other excellencies were, yet had we gazed upon Christ and been asked afterwards what was the most striking peculiarity in Him, we should have said His sorrow. Tears were His insignia, and the Cross His escutcheon. 2. Is not the title of "Man of sorrows" given to our Lord by way of eminence? He was not only sorrowful, but pre-eminent among the sorrowful. All men have a burden to bear, but His was heaviest of all. The reason for this superior sorrow may be found in the fact that with His sorrow there was no admixture of sin. Side by side with His painful sensitiveness of the evil of sin, was His gracious tenderness towards the sorrows of others. Besides this our Saviour had a peculiar relationship to sin. He was not merely afflicted with the sight of it, and saddened by perceiving its effects on others, but sin was actually laid upon Him, and He was himself numbered with the transgressors. 3. The title of "Man of sorrows," was also given to our Lord to indicate the constancy of His afflictions. He changed His place of abode, but He always lodged with sorrow. Sorrow wove His swaddling bands, and sorrow spun His winding sheet. 4. He was also "a Man of sorrows," for the variety of His woes; He was a man not of sorrow only, but of "sorrows." As to His poverty. He knew the heart-rendings of bereavement. Perhaps the bitterest of His sorrows were those which were connected with His gracious work. He came as the Messiah sent of God, on an embassage of love, and men rejected His claims. Nor did they stay at cold rejection; they then proceeded to derision and ridicule. They charged Him with every crime which their malice could suggest. And all the while He was doing nothing but seeking their advantage in all ways. As He proceeded in His life His sorrows multiplied. He preached, and when men's hearts were hard, and they would not believe what He said, "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." His sorrow was not that men injured Him, but that they destroyed

themselves; this it was that pulled up the sluices of His soul, and made His eyes o'erflow with tears: "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together," etc. But surely He found some solace with the few companions whom He had gathered around Him? He did; but for all that He must have found as much sorrow as solace in their company. They were dull scholars; they were miserable comforters for the Man of sorrows. The Saviour, from the very dignity of His nature, must suffer alone. The mountain-side, with Christ upon it, seems to me a suggestive symbol of His earthly life. His soul lived in vast solitudes, sublime and terrible, and there, amid a midnight of trouble, His spirit communed with the Father, no one being able to accompany Him into the dark glens and gloomy ravines of His unique experience. In the last, crowning sorrows of His life, there came upon Him the penal inflictions from God, the chastisement of our peace which was upon Him. III. "ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF." 1. With grief he had an intimate acquaintance. He did not know merely what it was in others, but it came home to Himself. We have read of grief, we have sympathized with grief, we have sometimes felt grief: but the Lord felt it more intensely than other men in His innermost soul. He and grief were bosom friends. 2. It was a continuous acquaintance. He did not call at grief's house sometimes to take a tonic by the way, neither did He sip now and then of the wormwood and the gall, but the quassia cup was always His, and ashes were always mingled with His bread. Not only forty days in the wilderness did Jesus fast; the world was ever a wilderness to Him, and His life was one long Lent. I do not say that He was not, after all, a happy man, for down deep in His soul benevolence always supplied a living spring of joy to Him. There was a joy into which we are one day to enter—the "joy of our Lord"—the "joy set before Him" for which "He endured the Cross, despising the shame;" but that does not at all take away from the fact that His acquaintance with grief was continuous and intimate beyond that of any man who ever lived. It was indeed a growing acquaintance with grief, for each step took Him deeper down into the grim shades of sorrow. 3. It was a voluntary acquaintance for our sakes. He need never have known a grief at all, and at any moment He might have said to grief, farewell. But He remained to the end, out of love to us, grief's acquaintance. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ as a Sufferer*:—1. Jesus suffered from what may be called the ordinary privations of humanity. Born in a stable, etc. We may not be able to assert that none ever suffered so much physical agony as He, but this is at least probable; for the exquisiteness of His physical organism in all likelihood made Him much more sensitive than others to pain. 2. He suffered keenly from the pain of anticipating coming evil. 3. He suffered from the sense of being the cause of suffering to others. To persons of an unselfish disposition the keenest pang inflicted by their own weakness or misfortunes may sometimes be to see those whom they would like to make happy rendered miserable through connection with themselves. To the child Jesus how gruesome must have been the story of the babes of Bethlehem, whom the sword of Herod smote when it was seeking for Him! Or, if His mother spared Him this recital, He must at least have learned how she and Joseph had to flee with Him to Egypt to escape the jealousy of Herod. As His life drew near its close, this sense that connection with Himself might be fatal to His friends forced itself more and more upon His notice. 4. The element of shame was, all through, a large ingredient in His cup of suffering. To a sensitive mind there is nothing more intolerable; it is far harder to bear than bodily pain. But it assailed Jesus in nearly every form, pursuing Him all through His life. He was railed at for the humbleness of His birth. The high-born priests and the educated rabbis sneered at the carpenter's son who had never learned, and the wealthy Pharisees derided Him. He was again and again called a madman. Evidently this was what Pilate took Him for. The Roman soldiers adopted an attitude of savage banter towards Him all through His trial and crucifixion, treating Him as boys torment one who is weak in the mind. He heard Barabbas preferred to Himself by the voice of His fellow-countrymen, and He was crucified between thieves, as if He were the worst of the worst. A hail of mockery kept falling on Him in His dying hours. Thus had He who was conscious of irresistible strength to submit to be treated as the weakest of weaklings, and He who was the Wisdom of the Highest to submit to be used as if He were less than a man. 5. But to Jesus it was more painful still, being the Holy One of God, to be regarded and treated as the chief of sinners. To one who loves God and goodness there can be nothing so odious as to be suspected of hypocrisy and to know that he is believed

to be perpetrating crimes at the opposite extreme from his public profession. Yet this was what Jesus was accused of. Possibly there was not a single human being, when He died, who believed that He was what He claimed to be. 6. If to the holy soul of Jesus it was painful to be believed to be guilty of sins which He had not committed, it must have been still more painful to feel that He was being thrust into sin itself. This attempt was often made. Satan tried it in the wilderness, and although only this one temptation of his is detailed, he no doubt often returned to the attack. Wicked men tried it; they resorted to every device to cause Him to lose His temper (Luke xi. 53, 54). Even friends, who did not understand the plan of His life, endeavoured to direct Him from the course prescribed to Him by the will of God—so much so that He had once to turn on one of them, as if he were temptation personified, with "Get thee behind Me, Satan." 7. While the proximity of sin awoke such loathing in His holy soul, and the touch of it was to Him like the touch of fire on delicate flesh, He was brought into the closest contact with it, and hence arose His deepest suffering. It pressed its loathsome presence on Him from a hundred quarters. He who could not bear to look on it saw it in its worst forms close to His very eyes. His own presence in the world brought it out; for goodness stirs up the evil lying at the bottom of wicked hearts. It was as if all the sin of the race were rushing upon Him, and Jesus felt it as if it were all His own. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *The Man of sorrows:*—I. THE LANGUAGE DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE CASE OF ONE WHO ENCOUNTERED ONLY THE ORDINARY OR THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF THE TRIALS WHICH BELONG TO HUMAN LIFE. There is implied in it a pre-eminence in sorrow, a peculiarly deep experience of grief. II. OF ALL THE MANY GRIEFS OF THE DIVINE REDEEMER IN HIS HUMAN LIFE, THERE WAS NOT ONE WHICH HE HIMSELF EITHER NEEDED OR DESERVED TO BEAR. When the apostle tells us that He was made perfect through suffering, the meaning is that He was by this means made officially perfect as a Saviour, as the Captain of salvation, and the High-Priest of His redeemed, and not that He lacked any moral excellence, to acquire which suffering was needful. So again, when it is said that He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, the meaning obviously is, that by putting Himself in a state of humiliation, and in the condition of a servant under law, He came to know by experience what it was to render obedience to the law, and not at all that He was ever defective in the least, as to the spirit of obedience to the Father's will. As He had no need of any improvement of His virtues, He had no faults, no sins, which called for chastisement. III. ALL THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LORD JESUS WERE ENDURED WITH UNWAVERING FORTITUDE. IV. IN ALL THE GRIEFS AND SORROWS WHICH THE BLESSED SAVIOUR SUFFERED, HIS MIND WAS CHIEFLY OCCUPIED WITH THE GOOD RESULTS IN WHICH HIS SUFFERINGS WERE TO ISSUE. He deliberately entered on His singular career of humiliation and self-sacrifice for the good of man and the glory of God. Practical lessons: 1. If even the Son of God, when on earth, was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, we certainly should not think it strange that days of trial are appointed unto us. 2. If our blessed Lord felt keenly what He suffered, and was even moved to tears, we need not reproach ourselves because we deeply feel our trials, and cannot but weep in the fulness of our grief. 3. If Christ was a willing sufferer, deliberately choosing to suffer for the good of others, we surely should consent to suffer for our own advantage. 4. If our blessed Lord and Saviour made less account of what He suffered than of the good results that were to follow, it is wise at least in us to do the same. (*Ray Palmer, D.D.*) *Christ the Man of sorrows:*—While on earth He was surrounded by many sources of pleasure. The earth teemed with every form of life, and the air was melodious with music. The sceneries of His native country suggested the sublimest imagery, and inspired poetry of the highest kind: and had He possessed none of these, He would have been perfectly happy; for He was the Infinite; His sorrows arose from—I. THE FELT RELATION OF A LOVING BEING TO A RUINED RACE. II. THE CRUSHING PRESSURE OF HIS MEDIATORIAL WORK. III. HIS CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE THAT THE RESULT OF HIS MISSION WOULD NOT BE EQUAL TO THE BENEVOLENCE OF HIS WILL. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*) *The mystery of sorrow:*—I. CONSIDER ITS RELATION TO MAN. There are facts which know no frontiers. In the inner life of thought and feeling such is sorrow. It is a universal language, it obliterates space, it annihilates time; it is the great leveller, it ignores rank, it stands head and shoulders above any dignity. Think again, it is too sacred to be only universal. It is also an intimate fact. None can comfort. There may be sweet help, deep and real sympathy, not comfort, no, for none can undo the tragic truth. Yes, there is One. One can come nearest to the feeling, and, in our eternal life, in a sense He can undo. One, only One, has gathered up

the representative experiences of all. II. The thought gains precision when we remember that IT BEARS A WITNESS FOR GOD. Let Love meet death or trouble, and the result is sorrow. This noblest human sorrow so begotten is a witness to the Source of its being. Love, the love of the creature, is his highest endowment from the Love of God. III. SORROW GAINS A CLEARER OUTLINE TO ITS FRAIL AND MISTY FORM AS SEEN IN ITS RELATION TO WHAT IS CALLED THE "SCHEME OF REDEMPTION;" seen, that is, in its place in the awakening and restoring of the human spirit, great though fallen. Sorrow here is a power. It takes varying tints. 1. At the darkest, it is a power of warning, of prophecy. It warns of a stern reality in this world—the dreadfulness of sin. 2. Better, it is a power to transfigure. Repentance is the one path to pardon, and it is a certain path. Whence comes true repentance? It comes from God's love seen in fairest, saddest image in "the Man of sorrows." 3. It is a power to purify. Sorrow sends you in on self. Godless sorrow would make self more selfish, "working death;" not so sorrow from the Cross of Christ. A life searched out, repented of, is a spirit purified. (*W. J. Knox-Little, M.A.*) *The suffering Christ:*—I. THE MATTER, what He suffered. II. THE MANNER, how He came to suffer. III. THE REASONS and ends why, for our good. Here are three chief lessons for a Christian to learn:—1. Patience and comfort. 2. Humility. 3. In the end, love. All this was for you. What will you do for God again? (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Sir Noel Paton's "Man of Sorrows":*—To the painter ere he sat down to produce this work of art many questions would suggest themselves. Among them, doubtless, would be these:—1. What shall be the scene? Of course, the artist would naturally think of many scenes in our Lord's life more or less appropriate for such a representation. The painter seems to have recognized the great truth which we all must have proved to some extent, that man tastes deepest of sorrow in loneliness, that the cross which weighs heaviest on any shoulder is not the cross which the world can see, but which is borne out of sight, when the heart, and no one else save God, knoweth its own bitterness. Thus Sir Noel Paton has represented "The Man of Sorrows" as isolated from His fellows, far away from the habitations of men and shut out of the world. The whole picture is one of desolation. In its centre and foreground is represented "The Man of Sorrows" sitting upon a jagged rock. And, oh, what sorrow is depicted there! Those large, full, liquid eyes brim over with tears; every expression of the countenance is charged with grief; the lips are wan, and a deep furrow crosses that young, manly brow. The swollen veins in the neck and temple, the powerful muscular action in the right hand, as with open fingers it rests heavily upon the rock, and in the left clenched tightly as it presses upon the thigh, and in the feet as they press the earth convulsively underneath—for the Man of Sorrows is represented with head uncovered and feet unsandalled—all these tell the story of an awful tension of a withering sorrow. 2. Closely and inseparably connected with the question of scene is that of the period in our Lord's life in which He can most appropriately be represented as the Man of sorrows. The artist chooses the eve of the Temptation, and thus selects the greatest transitional period of our Saviour's life—that beginning with the Baptism and closing with the Temptation. The time of day chosen is the twilight of morning. There is something in the twilight that is consistent not only with solemn, but also with sad thoughts and feelings. 3. What can account for the sorrow? You look to the picture in vain for the solution. The painting is a problem, an enigma. It is purposely so. The painter presents to us the great fact, not its explanation. He goes to Inspired Writ for that, and thus refers the perplexed spectator to the words of Isaiah as supplying the key to the whole painting: "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," etc. (vers. 4–6). These are the words which Sir Noel Paton adopts, and practically says, "There! that is what I mean." "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." How shall this false estimate of Him be corrected? Look at the picture; that Man of sorrows looks up and holds communion with the skies; see the half-open mouth expressive of expectation, and those eyes so full of tears and yet so full of vision. Verily He is not alone—the Father is with Him; for from the heavens and from a source other than the sun there descends through a rift of the clouds a shaft of light that looks like the light of the Father's countenance, and rests upon the face of this Sorrowing One. This human countenance thus lit up by the light of the Divine countenance is the painter's sublime answer to the old-world estimate of the Man of sorrows. What need of any more? (*D. Davies.*) *Christ's life a model for His people:*—The more deeply we enter into the meaning of Christ considered as the Divine Man, the more distinctly revealed it becomes to us that what His life was our

life is intended to be. There are instincts and there are impulses and ambitions that shrink from coming under the sovereignty of a commitment so cordial and entire. That accounts for the disproportionate emphasis so customarily laid upon the commercial feature of the atonement. It is easier and it is lazier to believe in a Christ that is going to pay my debts for me, than it is to grow up in Christ into a Divine endowment, that shall be itself the cure for insolvency and the material of wealth Divine and inexhaustible. You have really done nothing for a poor man by paying his debts for him, unless in addition to squaring his old accounts you have in such manner dealt with him as to guarantee him against being similarly involved in the time to come. Emphasize as we may the merely ransoming work of Christ, we are not made free men by having our fetters broken off, and we are not made wealthy men by having our debts paid. It is not what Christ delivers us from, but what He translates us into that makes us saved men in Christ. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Our Lord's life lived in shadow:*—No fair reading of the narrative of Christ's life will leave the impression that sorrow of heart was a grace that Christ cultivated. The pathetic was not a temper of spirit which He encouraged in Himself or in others. Heaviness of mind was not a thing to be sought in and for itself. There is no gainsaying the fact that one great object of His mission was to make the world glad. Still for all that He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. It needs also to be said that for us to be heavy-hearted merely because Christ was, to be sorrowful by a sheer act of imitation, is distinctly repugnant to everything like Christian sense, and at the farthest possible remove from all that deserves to be called Christian sincerity. Neither can we leave out of the account all those passages, especially in the New Testament, where particular praise is accorded to gladness of heart. *The problems of life involve sorrow:*—Nevertheless, when all these caveats have been entered and gladness of heart eulogized to the fullest extent, authorized by multitudinous expressions occurring throughout the entire Scriptures, it still remains beyond dispute that our Lord's life was lived in shadow, and that He died at last less because of the nails and the spear-wounds, than He did of a broken heart. (*Ibid.*) *The sorrow of strained powers:*—He came to interfere with the natural current of event. And it made Him tired. And a man, even a Divine man, is less apt to laugh when He is tired. A good deal of what we call our gladness of heart, if we will care to scrutinize it, is simply the congenial luxury of drifting down the current of event. If you are pulling your boat up-stream you will be sober while you are about it. Strained powers are serious. It is the farthest from our thought to disparage exuberance or even hilarity; nevertheless, it remains a fact that hilarity is feeling out at pasture and not feeling under the yoke. It is steam escaping at the throttle because it is not pushing at the piston. I venture to say that Christ could not shake His purpose off. He was here to stay the downward drift of event; the purpose was too vast to be easily flung aside, and His muscles were too solidly knotted to it to be easily unknotted and relaxed. And we shall have to go on and say that it was an inherent part of Christ to have a purpose and to be mightily bent to its achievement; and not only that, it was an inherent part of Christ as the Saviour of this world to seize upon the current of event and of history and to undertake to reverse it. Exactly that was the genius of the Christ-mission. (*Ibid.*) *The Christ-life in the Christian:*—You cannot drift down the tide of event and be a Christ man or a Christ woman. The world is to be saved; the tide is to be reversed. Man inspired of God is to do it; and you cannot buckle yourself down to that problem in Christian whole-heartedness and not grow sober under it. Now you see the philosophy of the sober Christ. He flung Himself against forty centuries of bad event, and the Divine Man got bruised by the impact. He stood up and let forty centuries jump on Him; He held His own, but blood broke through His pores in perspiration, and about that there is nothing humorous. The edge of this truth is not broken by the fact that Christ took hold of the work of the world's saving in a larger way than it is possible for us to do, and that therefore the burden of His undertaking came upon Him in a heavier, wider, and more crushing way than it can come upon us; and that therefore while it overwhelmed Him in sorrow, our smaller mission and lighter task can with entire propriety leave us buoyant and gladsome. All of that conception of the case lacks dignity and reach. You can't take hold of a great matter in a small way. (*Ibid.*) *The sorrow of love:*—It is but a step now to go on and speak of the saddening effect necessarily flowing from the circumstances under which in this world Christian work has to be done. It was the love which Christ had for the world that made Him sad while doing His work in the world; and the infinitude of His love is what explains the unutterableness of

His pain; for the world in which Christ fulfilled His mission was a suffering world. Now a man who is without love can be in the midst of suffering and not suffer. A loveless spirit grieves over his own pain, but has no sense of another's pain, and no feeling of being burdened by another's pain. Love has this peculiar property, that it makes the person whom we love one with us, so that his experience becomes a part of our own life, his pain becomes painful to us, his burdens make us tired. The mother feels her child's pain as keenly as though it were her own pain, perhaps more so. In its Divine relations this is all expressed in those familiar words of Scripture, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Sympathy is the form which love takes in a suffering world. Love is the finest type of communism. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's great capacity for suffering:*—The measure of our being is our capacity for sorrow or joy. Captain Conder speaks of the shadow cast by Mount Hermon being as much as seventy miles long at some periods. Was it not the very greatness of Christ that made His joys and His griefs equally unique? (*H. O. Mackey.*) **We hid as it were our faces from Him.**—*A sad confession:*—In the margin of your Bibles this passage is rendered, "He hid as it were His face from us." The literal translation of the Hebrew would be, "He was as a hiding of faces from Him," or "from us." Some critical readers think these words were intended to describe our Lord as having so humbled Himself, and brought Himself to such a deep degradation, that He was comparable to the leper who covered his face and cried, "Unclean, unclean," hiding himself from the gaze of men. Abhorred and despised by men, He was like one put aside because of His disease and shunned by all mankind. Others suppose the meaning to be that on account of our Lord's terrible and protracted sorrow His face wore an expression so painful and grievous that men could scarcely bear to look upon Him. They hid as it were their faces from Him—amazed at that brow all carved with lines of anxious thought, those cheeks all ploughed with furrows of deep care, those eyes all sunk in shades of sadness, that soul bowed down, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death! It may be so; we cannot tell. I have a plain, practical purpose to pursue. Here is an indictment to which we must all plead guilty. I. Sometimes men hide their faces from Jesus IN COOL CONTEMPT OF HIM. How astounding! how revolting! He ought surely to be esteemed by all mankind. 1. Some show their opposition by attempting to ignore or to tarnish the dignity of His person. 2. Are there not others who affect great admiration for Jesus of Nazareth as an example of virtue and benevolence, who nevertheless reject His mediatorial work as our Redeemer? As a substitutionary sacrifice they do not and cannot esteem Him. 3. Then they will pour contempt upon the various doctrines of His Gospel. 4. And with what pitiful disdain the Lord's people are slighted! Do I address anybody who has despised the Lord Jesus Christ? Your wantonness can offer no excuse but your ignorance. And as for your ignorance, it is without excuse. II. A far more common way in which men hide their faces from Christ is BY THEIR HEEDLESSNESS, THEIR INDIFFERENCE, THEIR NEGLECT. III. We hid as it were our faces from Him BY PREFERRING ANY OTHER MODE OF SALVATION TO SALVATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST. IV. After we were quite sure that we could not be saved other than by the one Mediator, do you remember how we continued to hide our face from Jesus BY PERSISTENT UNBELIEF IN HIM? V. But there are some of us who must plead guilty to another charge; we have hidden as it were our faces from Him since He has saved us, and since we have known His love, BY OUR SILLY SHAME AND OUR BASE COWARDICE. VI. Many, if not all, of us who are believers will penitently confess that we have sometimes hidden our faces from Christ BY NOT WALKING IN CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "We hid as it were our faces from Him." Literally, "as one from whom there is hiding of face," as if shrinking from a horrible sight. (*Canon Cook.*) The impersonal form refers to the men just named, or all those of note and influence. Their faces were averted from Him, as a lunatic, beside Himself, or one possessed, as a deceiver and a blasphemer. (*T. R. Birks.*)

Vers. 4–6. **Surely He hath borne our griefs.**—*Christ's love and man's unthankfulness:*—I. CHRIST'S LOVE. 1. The certainty of what is averred of Christ: "Surely." 2. The acts of Christ's obedience, set forth in two words: He hath "borne," He hath "carried." 3. The objects. They are "griefs," "sorrows." II. MAN'S UNTHANKFULNESS, in censuring Christ and despising Him; and there consider—1. The persons: "We." 2. The guilt. Esteeming Christ stricken and smitten of God. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The pressure of the burden on God:*—My positions are these—1. The Lord—electing to perpetuate the sinful race, to endure all the sorrow which Heaven would look upon, and the question which would fall upon His

government through the existence of a world so full of wrong and wretchedness, in a universe whose order was his charge—stooped at once, in infinite, tender pity, to lift the burden, and to become a fellow-wayfarer in the sorrowful pilgrimage to which man had doomed himself by his sin. Suffering sin to live on and reproduce itself, with all its bitter fruits, in the universe which He made to be so blest, He needs must become its sacrifice; making the atonement for the sin which He did not on the moment crush, and bearing the burden of the sorrow which He did not at once destroy. And this is Divine love. It must share the sorrow which it allows to live on, though the fountain of the sorrow be a sin which he hates; it must lift and bear the burden which most righteous necessities lay heavily upon erring souls. We none of us know, even dimly, what is meant by "Emmanuel," "God with us." God always with us, incarnate from the hour when He announced Himself as the woman's seed, and the destroyer of her foe. God with us, our fellow in all the dread experience into which our sharing in the sin of Adam has driven us; knowing Himself the full pressure of its burdens, and infinitely more nearly touched than we are by everything that concerns the dark, sad history of mankind. 2. The fellowship of God with the race in the very hour of the transgression infused at once a tincture of hope into the experience of the sinner, and made it, from the first, a discipline unto life instead of a judgment unto death. 3. This first promise to man, this fellowship of God with the sinning, suffering race, whose existence He perpetuated, pledged Him to the sacrifice of Calvary, the baptism of Pentecost, and the abiding of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, with the world. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Christ the Burden-bearer*:—There are two questions which here suggest themselves—I. WHAT BURDENS PRESSED ON CHRIST, WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN HIS, UNLESS HE HAD TAKEN THEM UP? 1. By His incarnation He inserted Himself into our race, and by assuming our own nature, He felt whatever sorrows press on man as man. 2. By His position He represented our race. As the Son of God, He is Heaven's representative on earth. As the Son of Man, He is our Great High Priest, to intercede with Heaven. Thus all earth's spiritual concerns rested on Him. Could such a work be entrusted to man, and He be otherwise than "a man of sorrows"? 3. By His own personal sympathy He so felt for man, that He made the sorrows of others His own. His was no heartless officialism. 4. By suffering and sorrow, Christ not only discloses His own human sympathy, but by reason of the twofoldness of His nature, that human sympathy was an incarnation of the Divine! 5. But we have to take one more step, in accounting for the burden which lay upon Christ. He came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life, a ransom for many." II. WHAT BURDENS DO NOT REST UPON US, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN OURS IF CHRIST HAD NOT BORNE THEM AWAY? 1. The burden of unatoned guilt rests on none! "Behold the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world!" 2. The burden of hopeless corruption of nature need rest on none. When the Son of God came to be a sacrifice for us, He came to be also a Living Root in us. He allied Himself with human weakness, and joined it to His almightiness, that in Him that weakness might be lost, and be substituted by "everlasting strength." 3. The burden of unshared sorrows rests on none. Does our sorrow arise from the sin without us? That pressed more heavily on Christ than ever it can do on us. Does it come from personal trial? Christ's were far heavier than ours. Does it come from the temptations of Satan? He was in all points tempted like as we are. But perhaps it may be said, "By reason of the infirmities of the flesh, I am betrayed into impatience, murmuring and fretfulness and I cannot feel that Christ has lifted off that burden, for I am sure Christ never felt any fretfulness or impatience, and so He cannot sympathize with mine." But, strange as it may seem at first sight, it is just here that the perfection of Christ's sympathy is seen. In this last-named course of sorrow there is a mixture of what is frail with what is wrong. But since Christ's nature was untainted by sin, He can draw exactly the line between infirmity and sin, which sinful natures cannot do. Now, we do not want, and we ought not to wish for sympathy with the wrong, but only with weakness and frailty. How does Christ, then, meet this complex case? Distinguishing most clearly between the two, He looks on the infirmity, and has for it a fulness of pity; He discerns the sin, and has for that fulness of power to forgive it, and fulness of grace to remove it! "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." 4. The burden of dreaded death need rest on none. Christ passed through death that He might deliver them who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage. 5. The great burden of the destiny of the human race rests not on us. Christ has taken that up.

(*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The death of Christ a propitiation for sin:*—Two things are asserted—I. THAT THE MESSIAH SHOULD SUFFER NOT FOR HIS OWN SINS, BUT FOR OURS (vers. 4–5). This indeed is what His enemies would deny, esteeming Him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," for His own sins, His imposture, usurpation and blasphemy. But if we peruse the history of His life we shall find that the sum of all they had to lay to His charge was His presuming to act in a character which really did (but which they would not believe did) belong to Him: that the whole course of His behaviour exemplified the most perfect integrity of heart and life, and showed Him to be the spotless Lamb of God, in whom there was no sin. Hence it follows that He must have suffered for the sins of others. 1. Some have put this gloss upon the words, "He was wounded for"—*i. e.* (they say) "*by* our transgressions," and "bruised *by* our iniquities." Or, that it was owing to the sins of the Jews that He suffered so much as He did. It was their malice, unrighteousness and envy that was the cause of all His suffering. But this construction is not only apparently forced, but is confuted by the whole scope and tenor of the prophecy. For He is not said to be smitten by the Jews, but for them; nay, that He was smitten of God for them, for it was "the Lord" that laid on Him the punishment of their iniquities. 2. Others say that He bore our sins by imputation, and was wounded for our transgressions, because our transgressions were imputed to Him, or reckoned as His. But you will say, perhaps, "Were not our sins then imputed to Christ?" I answer, I find no fault with the word, provided it be rightly understood and explained. If by "imputation" be meant, that our sins were actually made over or transferred to Him, so as to become His, I do not see how this can be conceived possible. "But might they not be reckoned His?" No, for that would be to reckon them what they were not, and what it was impossible they should be. But if by our sins being "imputed" to Christ be understood no more than that the punishment thereof was actually laid upon Him, this is easily conceived, and readily granted: that is what the sacred Scriptures everywhere say. If anything further be necessary to illustrate this affair, we may explain it by the case of the propitiatory sacrifices under the law, all which pointed at or prefigured the great Christian sacrifice under the Gospel. Those piacular victims were of Divine appointment. The sin-offerings, over the heads of which the priest was to confess the sins of the people, were substituted in the room of the offenders, and died instead of those sinners for whom they were offered. The sins of the people were not transferred over to the victim, but the victim was slain for the sins of the people. Lev. xvi. 21, 22 must of necessity be taken in a figurative construction: because the sins of a man can in no other sense be transferred to, or laid upon a beast, than by transferring upon it the punishment of them. 3. Others there are who acknowledge that Christ died for us, meaning thereby that He died for our sakes or for our good, and to set us a perfect example of patience and submission under sufferings; but not for our sins, or in our room and stead. But if Christ died for us as our Sacrifice, or as the sacrifices under the law died for the offenders (as He certainly did if they were proper types of Him), then He must have died in our room, and as substituted in our place. 4. Others think that all those places of Scripture which speak of Christ's death as a "propitiation" are to be explained in a figurative sense: that the apostles borrowed those sacrifical terms from the Jewish law, and applied them to the death of Christ, only by way of accommodation or analogy, not that the blood of Christ did really and properly expiate or atone for sin, any more than that of the Jewish sacrifices; but that He only died for us as a pledge to assure us that God would pardon and accept us upon our repentance. To which it may suffice to say, that the apostle does not speak of the death of Christ merely by way of analogy to the Jewish sacrifices, but as typified, represented and prefigured by them (Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 13, 14; x. 4). II. THAT THE GREAT END AND DESIGN OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING FOR OUR SINS, WAS TO MAKE OUR PEACE WITH GOD. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him," etc. These words plainly intimate to us the way whereby our peace is made with God, viz. by our justification and sanctification. (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ:*—In these words Isaiah declares the end of Christ's sufferings. The Jews, who put Him to death, did "esteem Him smitten of God," that is, crucified according to the will of God, for attempting to turn away men from the law of Moses. And, to this day, they speak of Jesus as one who suffered according to the law of God, for seducing the Israelites from the faith of their forefathers. The prophet gives a different view of Christ's death. Instead of dying for His own sins, He was wounded for our transgressions. 1. There is no passage of Scripture in which the substitution of Christ's

sufferings, in place of those of the sinner, is more clearly revealed than in our text. 2. All agree that men are sinners, and that sin deserves punishment. But when we come to ask how it may be forgiven, and for what consideration God forgives it, we begin to differ. The Trinitarian doctrine is, that the eternal Son of God, the uncreated, and equal with the Father, became incarnate, and suffered the punishment of our sins, as our Substitute; and that for the sake of what He has done, we may be forgiven. They who are opposed to us, on the other hand, believe that Christ, a created being, but still so very exalted that He may be called a God—yet not the supreme God—took our nature upon Him, that He might teach men a purer religion than was ever before known, and set before them a perfect example, and thus draw them away from their sins; so that He saves us from our sins, not by atoning for them, but just as any merely good man does, who so teaches and practises as to lead men from sin to holiness. While engaged in this work, they assert further, that the Jews seized upon the Saviour and put Him to death; and Jesus, to show that He was persuaded of the truth of what He had taught, gave Himself up to die, just as Latimer and Ridley sealed their testimony with their blood; and that thus Christ may be said to have died for us, because He met His death in seeking to do us good. Some go a little further, and believe that God was so pleased with the holy life, and the martyr-death of His Son, that for His sake He is graciously inclined to forgive sin, just as the good conduct of one child may procure favours for an erring brother, for whom he pleads. They expect to be saved through their repentance, by the mercy of God; we expect salvation through the alone merits of the suffering Son of God. 3. Now let us go on to see how this great doctrine of our Church is sustained by Scripture. 4. But again, we ask attention to the fact, that Christ's sufferings were not so much from man as from God, not bodily so much as of the soul. How do we account for this? If He was seized upon by the Jews, and died merely as a martyr, would God have withdrawn His presence from Him in His last agonies? Would He not then have had, as other good men have had, the brightest views of the Divine presence and comfort? But it was just the reverse. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It is said God made Christ's soul, not His body alone, an offering for sin; it was foretold that it should be mental, not merely corporal suffering, that He should endure. And such, in fact, was the case. 5. How can these facts be explained on the Unitarian system? (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *Redemption*:—I. THE NEED (ver. 6). Sheep, but astray; through following their own inclinations. Divine pity is on the selfish and the lost. II. THE MEANS. 1. The reality of the redemption seen in the fact that Christ died. He did not die for His own sin; "I am innocent of the blood of this just man," said His judge. He did not die through His own feebleness; "I have power to lay down My life," etc., said Christ. He did not die by accident; "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all:" it was the will of the Father, and foretold, and a fact. 2. The form of the redemption. (1) The humiliation of Christ. The humiliation of Christ teaches the intensity of sin. Where sin is not felt His humiliation is misunderstood. "We did esteem Him stricken," etc. (2) The substitution of Christ. The substitution of Christ teaches the wealth in our redemption; where Christ is not known in His Divine nature the riches of salvation not fully appreciated. III. THE EFFECT (ver. 5). 1. Sin atoned for, iniquity borne away. 2. Peace. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." "Being justified by faith we have peace." 3. Healing. We are free from sin to be the servants of God. The depth of His love the measure of our obligation. As that cannot be fathomed our obligation can never be fully realized. (*R. V. Pryce, M.A., LL.B.*) *Vicarious suffering*:—Great is the power of vicarious suffering in its endless varieties. By the struggles and the obstinate questionings of deep souls the world of ordinary men is redeemed and elevated. It is by His suffering prophets that God most truly saves the world. By the untold miseries of Job, by the deep grief of Isaiah, by the piercing sorrows of Paul, by the weary restlessness of Augustine, by the fiery agonies of Luther, by the sore trials of John Bunyan, by the spiritual travail of Wesley and Whitfield, by the brave endurance of Theodore Parker, by the torn heart of Robertson of Brighton, by the manifold disquietudes and internal gloom of the great army of bewildered doubters and baffled pioneers—by all these we have been led from the house of bondage and the city of destruction, from the valley of the shadow of death, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (*A. Crauford, M.A.*) *Luther and Bunyan*:—By their "agony and bloody sweat," it is given to sympathetic souls in every age to deliver the world to some extent.

Thus by the stripes of Luther John Bunyan was healed. From Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians Bunyan received peace and victory. (*Ibid.*) *Vicarious suffering*, with its far-reaching influence, pervades the whole world. Assuredly this is not due to any after-thought of God. It is an essential part of the original arrangement. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." (*Ibid.*) *Society an organism:*—The English Deists certainly erred in rejecting the true inner meaning of the doctrine of salvation by vicarious suffering. The Deists did not realize the truth that society is an organism. And our perception of this fact in the present day enables us to appreciate the real meaning of the doctrine of vicarious suffering. This truth shines all the more clearly, owing to the light of modern science, which has discredited the old Deism even more effectually than Bishop Butler did. (*Ibid.*) *Sadder and mysterious aspects of vicarious suffering:*—Some of these aspects are so unspeakably sad that it is only in the light of a future life that I can bear to gaze upon them. We do but skim over the surface of the deep mystery of vicarious suffering, unless we recognize the fact that the spiritual world is full of wasted lives, of marvellous abortions, of grand and heroic failures, of illustrious scapegoats dying in the bleak wilderness of ignominy and defeat, bearing away the sins of the many, and yet by them misunderstood, condemned, and anathematized. In many respects these outcast scapegoats of the spiritual world are the truest saviours of our race, though by commonplace religionists they "are numbered with the transgressors," and die unhealed and unredeemed, and "make their graves with the wicked." (*Ibid.*) *The world's majestic failures* are a sorrowful hint of God's inexhaustible resources. (*Ibid.*) *The failure of one the gain of another:*—I suppose that no thoughtful person would think of denying the fact that predestined failure is the lot of many noble natures here on earth. They are stepping-stones on which others "rise to higher things." Of each of them we might truly affirm that he is thus addressed by others, "Bow down, that we may go over." And, in meek obedience, he complies; so that we write concerning him, "And thou hast laid thy body on the ground, and as the street to them that went over." Such souls are scapegoats of the race, bearing away the deficiencies and the sins of many into the wilderness of isolation, despondency, and disaster. They drink to the very dregs the cup of ancestral sinfulness, and their brethren thereby escape that fatal heritage of the soul. It seems as if it were necessary that they should be lost, in order that others may be saved. Consciously or unconsciously, they suck out the poison from the wounds of the human race. (*Ibid.*) *Vicarious sacrifice in the intellectual world:*—In the intellectual world it is often expedient that one man should be sacrificed for the race. For instance, David Hume's total want of spirituality, though extremely injurious to him individually, was probably highly beneficial to the race in one way, viz. by showing to what monstrous conclusions intellect by itself was likely to lead. And the very infirmities and aberrations of the intellect, in some men, are full of instruction for the race at large. Unrestrained imagination often mars or destroys the life of its possessor, as did that of Rousseau, but adds much to the world's abiding mental wealth. (*Ibid.*) *Poisons as tonics:*—The spiritual poisons of individuals are often turned into tonics for the race. (*Ibid.*) Stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.—*Jesus, smitten of God:*—Smitten as with a loathsome leprosy—the curse-mark of judicial vengeance upon Him, for so it is rendered by St. Jerome, "We thought Him to be a leper." (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) "*Stricken*" is the expression used when God visits a man with severe and sudden sickness (Gen. xii. 17; 1 Sam. vi. 9), especially leprosy, which was regarded as pre-eminently the "stroke" of God's hand (Job xix. 21; 2 Kings xv. 5; Lev. xiii. 3, 9, 20), and the direct consequence of sin. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The Servant of the Lord pictured as a leper:*—That the Servant is pictured as a leper is suggested by several particulars in the description, such as His marred and disfigured form, and His isolation from human society, as well as the universal conviction of His contemporaries that He was a special object of the Divine wrath; and the impression is confirmed by the parallel case of Job, the typical righteous sufferer, whose disease was elephantiasis, the most hideous form of leprosy. It has to be borne in mind, of course, that the figure of the Servant is, in some sense, an ideal creation of the prophet's mind, so that the leprosy is only a strong image for such sufferings as are the evidence of God's wrath against sin. (*Ibid.*) *The mystery of our Lord's sufferings:*—I. THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS—MAN'S EXPLANATION OF IT. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." And it is impossible to say that this is other than a fair view to take from man's position and

with man's knowledge. 1. Let us try and realize the process of mind in a man who was told of Christ's sufferings and death, but had no knowledge of His personal innocence; no conception of Him as the "spotless One," separate from sinners. Such a man would only decide that He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." To such a man it would be plain enough that God has established an immediate connection between sin and suffering. And yet we know, we feel, that this explanation of the mystery of our Lord's sufferings is insufficient and incorrect. It does not lift the veil. It is altogether too commonplace. Good enough if Christ were a fellow-man. Worthless—nay, wholly wrong—if He be the spotless Lamb of God; if He be the "Son of God with power." 2. Then let us try to realize the process of mind in a man who has some knowledge of Christ's life, and especially of His personal innocence, as one who "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Such a man might say, Christ's sufferings were a specially and extraordinary Divine judgment. "He was smitten of God." Such a knowledge of Christ's life would convince the man that Jesus must have been a most amiable and excellent person, an obedient Son, a loving Friend, a gentle-hearted Brother; one who could claim to be a firm and wise moral Teacher. The man would feel sure that the influence of such an one as Jesus must have been very great upon His age. The fast departing moral life of Judaism ought to have had its flickering flame fanned afresh by the presence and teachings of such a Master-Spirit. And then, as he saw Him despised, persecuted, and at last put to the ignominious slave's death of the cross, what could he think about it all but this? It was a sad calamity, one of those mysterious Divine judgments that seem to come in every age, and puzzle sorely the sons of men. Man can only say of the sufferer—"Smitten of God." In this way a man might fairly regard the innocent Jesus. Nay; this, too, is insufficient; it is but the beginning of an explanation. A calamity! Yes, but only a seeming calamity, seeing that by dying He conquered death, "led captivity captive," and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Man cannot of himself explain the mystery of Christ's sufferings. But he can be humble, and learn so much of the mystery as God may be pleased to reveal. II. THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS—GOD'S EXPLANATION OF IT. "He was wounded for our transgressions," etc. 1. We may first notice that God sustains man's view, that the sufferings of Christ were His appointment; but He further declares that they were an unusual and altogether singular appointment. 2. Then God's explanation declares that the sufferings of Christ bore no relation whatever to His own guilt. 3. God affirms, further, that Christ suffered as the Representative or Substitute, for others. Is it any wonder that an absorbing love should grow in our souls toward this vicariously-suffering Saviour? In the restoration of man to the Divine favour; in the great and gracious work of "reconciliation," we can recognize three stages—(1) A loving purpose cherished in the deep heart of the Holy Father, that He would recover, deliver, and save His lost, rebellious, prodigal children. (2) That Divine and loving purpose effectually wrought out by God's well-beloved and only begotten Son, in His incarnate life, labours, sufferings, sacrifice and death. (3) The third stage is yet incomplete. It is the voluntary and hearty acceptance, by the long sought children, of the redemption thus gloriously wrought for them. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*)

Vers. 5. **But He was wounded for our transgressions.**—*The sufferings of Christ:*—Three things suggest themselves as requiring explanation to one who seriously contemplates the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. 1. An innocent man suffers. 2. The death of Jesus is the apparent defeat and destruction of one who possessed extraordinary and supernatural powers. 3. This apparent defeat and ruin, instead of hindering the progress of His work, became at once, and in all the history of the progress of His doctrine has been emphatically, the instrument whereby a world is conquered. The death of Jesus has not been mourned by His followers, has never been concealed, but rather exulted in and prominently set forth as that to which all men must chiefly look if they would regard Christ and His mission right. The shame and the failure issue in glory and completest success. What is the philosophy of this? Has any ever been given which approaches the Divinely revealed meaning supplied by our text? "He was wounded for our transgressions, etc. We learn here—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST RESULTED FROM OUR SINS. II. THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS WERE RELATED TO THE DIVINE LAW. III. THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS BECAME REMEDIAL OF HUMAN SINFULNESS. (*L. D. Bevan, D.D.*) *A short catechism:*—1. What is man's condition by nature? (1) Under transgression. (2) Under iniquities. (3) At feud with God. (4) Under wounds and most loathsome

diseases of a sinful nature. 2. How are folks freed from this sinful and miserable condition? (1) In general, before the quarrel can be taken away, and their peace can be made, there must be a satisfaction. (2) More particularly there must be a satisfaction, because there is the justice of God that hath a claim by a standing law; the holiness of God, that must be vindicated; the faith of God, that must cause to come to pass what it hath pledged itself to, as well in reference to threatening as to promise. 3. Who maketh this satisfaction? The text says, "He" and "Him." The Messiah. 4. How does He satisfy justice? (1) He enters Himself in our room. (2) Christ's performance and payment of the debt according to His undertaking, implies a covenant and transaction on which the application is founded. (3) Our Lord Jesus, in fulfilling the bargain, and satisfying justice, paid a dear price: He was wounded, bruised, suffered stripes and punishment. 5. What are the benefits that come by these sufferings? (1) The benefits are such that if He had not suffered for us, we should have suffered all that He suffered ourselves. (2) More particularly we have peace and pardon. Healing. 6. To whom hath Christ procured all these good things? (1) The elect; (2) who are guilty of heinous sins. 7. How are these benefits derived from Christ to the sinner? (1) Justly and in a legal way; (2) freely. (*J. Durham.*) *Sin:*—Verses 5 and 6 are remarkable for the numerous and diversified references to sin which they make. Within the short compass of two verses that sad fact is referred to no less than six times, and on each occasion a different figure is used to describe it. It is transgression—the crossing of a boundary and trespassing upon forbidden land. It is iniquity—the want of equity: the absence of just dealing. It is the opposite of peace—the root of discord and enmity between us and God. It is a disease of the spirit—difficult to heal. It is a foolish and wilful wandering, like that of a stray sheep. And it is a heavy burden, which crushes him on whom it lies. So many and serious are the aspects of sin. (*B. J. Gibbon.*) *The sufferings of Christ:*—I. ATTEND TO THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD, as described in the text. The sufferings of the Saviour are described in the Scriptures with simplicity and grandeur combined. Nothing can add to the solemnity and force of the exhibition. 1. The prophet tells us that the Son of God was "wounded." The Hebrew word here translated "wounded," signifies to run through with a sword or some sharp weapon, and, as here used, seems to refer to those painful wounds which our Lord received at the time of His crucifixion. 2. The prophet tells us that the Son of God was "bruised." This expression seems to have a reference to the labours, afflictions, and sorrows which our blessed Lord sustained, especially in the last scenes of His life. 3. The prophet tells us that the Son of God bore chastisements and stripes. II. CONSIDER THE PROCURING CAUSE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD. "Our transgressions." "Our iniquities." III. ATTEND TO THE GRACIOUS DESIGN AND HAPPY EFFECTS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." 1. One gracious design and blessed effect of the sufferings of the Son of God was to procure for us reconciliation with God. 2. The renovating of our nature. (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *Substitution:*—There is no more remarkable language than this in the whole of the Word of God. It is so clear a statement of the doctrine of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, that we do not hesitate to say, no words could teach it if it be not taught here. We are distinctly told—I. THAT THERE BELONGS TO US A SAD AND GRIEVOUS WEIGHT OF SIN. There are three terms expressive of what belong to us: "our transgressions," "our iniquities," "gone astray." These three phrases have indeed a common feature; they all indicate what is wrong—even sin, though they represent the wrong in different aspects. 1. "Transgressions." The word thus translated indicates sin in one or other of three forms—either that of missing the mark through aimlessness, or carelessness, or a wrong aim; or of coming short, when, though the work may be right in its direction, it does not come up to the standard; or of crossing a boundary and going over to the wrong side of a line altogether. In all these forms our sins have violated the holy law of God. 2. "Iniquities." This word also has reference to moral law as the standard of duty. The Hebrew word is from a root which signifies "to bend," "to twist," and refers to the tortuous, crooked, winding ways of men when they conform to no standard at all save that suggested by their own fancies or conceits, and so walk "according to the course of this world." 3. The third phrase has reference rather to the God of Law, than to the law of God, and to Him in His relation to us of Lord, Leader, Shepherd, and Guide. There is not only the infringement of the great law of right, but also universal neglect and abandonment of Divine leadership and love; and as the result of this,

grievous mischief is sure to follow. "Like the sheep," they find their way out easily enough; they go wandering over "the dark mountains," each one to "his own way," but of themselves they can never find the way home again. And so far does this wandering propensity increase in force, that men come to think there is no home for them; the loving concern of God for the wanderers is disbelieved, and the Supreme Being is regarded in the light of a terrible Judge eager to inflict retribution. And all this is a pressure on God. He misses the wanderers. And through the prophet, the Spirit of God would let men know that the wanderings of earth are the care of Heaven. Nor let us fail to note that in these verses there is an entirely different aspect of human nature and action from that presented in the verse preceding. There, the expressions were "our griefs," "our sorrows." Here, they are "our transgressions," etc. Griefs and sorrows are not in themselves violations of moral law, though they may be the results of them, and though every violation of moral law may lead to sorrow. Still they must not be confounded, though inseparably connected. Grief may solicit pity: wrong incurs penalty. And the sin is ours. The evil is wide as the race. Each one's sin is a personal one: "Every one to his own way." Sin is thus at once collective and individual. No one can charge the guilt of his own sin on any one else. On whom or on what will he cast the blame? On influences? But it was for him to resist and not to yield. On temptation? But temptation cannot force. In the judgment of God each one's sin is his own. II. THIS SERVANT OF GOD BEING LADEN WITH OUR SINS, SHARES OUR HERITAGE OF WOE. How remarkable is the antithesis here—Transgressions; iniquities; wanderings, are ours. Wounds; bruises; chastisements; stripes, are His. There is also a word indicating the connection between the two sides of the antithesis, "wounded for our transgressions"—on account of them; but if this were all the explanation given, it might mean no more than that the Messiah would feel so grieved at them that they would bruise or wound Him. But there is a far fuller and clearer expression: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." This expression fixes the sense in which the Messiah was wounded and bruised on our account. In pondering over this, let us work our way step by step. 1. The inflexibility of the moral law and the absolute righteousness and equity of the Lawgiver in dealing with sin are thoughts underlying the whole of this chapter. The most high God is indeed higher than law; and though He never violates law, He may, out of the exuberance of His own love, do more than law requires, and may even cease to make law the rule of His action. But even when that is the case, and He acts *χωρὶς νόμου* (apart from law," Rom. iii. 21), while He manifests the infinite freedom of a God to do whatsoever He pleaseth, He will also show to the world that His law must be honoured in the penalties inflicted for its violation. This is indicated in the words, "The Lord hath laid on Him," etc. Nor ought any one for a moment to think of this as "exaction." Exactness is not exactingness; it would not be called so, nor would the expression be tolerated if applied to a judge who forbade the dishonouring of a national law, or to a father who would not suffer the rules of his house to be broken with impunity. 2. It is revealed to us that in the mission of this servant of Jehovah, the Most High would act on the principle of substitution. When a devout Hebrew read the words we are now expounding, the image of the scapegoat would at once present itself to him. 3. The Messiah was altogether spotless; He fulfilled the ideal typified by the precept that the sacrificial lamb was to be without blemish. Being the absolutely sinless One, He was fitted to stand in a relation to sin and sinners which no being who was tainted with sin could possibly have occupied. 4. The twofold nature of the Messiah—He being at once the Son of God and Son of man, qualified Him to stand in a double relation;—as the Son of God, to be Heaven's representative on earth—as the Son of man, to be earth's representative to Heaven. Thus, His offering of Himself was God's own sacrifice (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 10; Rom. v. 8; 2 Cor. v. 19), and yet, in another sense, it was man's own sacrifice (2 Cor. v. 14, 21; Gal. iii. 13). 5. By His incarnation, Christ came and stood in such alliance with our race, that what belonged to the race belonged to Him, as inserted into it, and representative of it. We need not use any such expression as this—"Christ was punished for our sin." That would be wrong. But sin was condemned in and through Christ, through His taking on Himself the liabilities of a world, as their one representative Man who would stand in their stead; and by the self-abandonment of an unparalleled love, would let the anguish of sin's burden fall on His devoted head. Paul, in his Epistle to Philemon pleads for Onesimus thus, "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put

that to my account." So the Son of God has accepted our liabilities. Only thus can we explain either the strong language of the prophecy, or the mysterious sorrow of Christ depicted in the Gospel history. On whatever grounds sin's punishment was necessary had there been no atonement, on precisely those grounds was an atonement necessary to free the sinner from deserved punishment. This gracious work was in accord with the appointment of the Father and with the will of the Son. 6. Though the law is honoured in this substitution of another for us, yet the substitution itself does not belong to law, but to love! Grace reigns; law is not trifled with; it is not infringed on: nay, it is "established." III. CHRIST HAVING ACCEPTED OUR HERITAGE OF WOE, WE RECEIVE THROUGH HIM A HERITAGE OF PEACE. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Vicarious suffering:*—In a large family of evil-doers, where the father and mother are drunkards, the sons jail-birds and the daughters steeped in shame, there may be one, a daughter, pure, sensible, sensitive, living in the home of sin like a lily among thorns. And she makes all the sin of the family her own. The others do not mind it; the shame of their sin is nothing to them; it is the talk of the town, but they do not care. Only in her heart their crimes and disgrace meet like a sheaf of spears, piercing and mangling. The one innocent member of the family bears the guilt of all the rest. Even their cruelty to herself she hides, as if all the shame of it were her own. Such a position did Christ hold in the human family. He entered it voluntarily, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; He identified Himself with it; He was the sensitive centre of the whole. He gathered into His heart the shame and guilt of all the sin He saw. The perpetrators did not feel it, but He felt it. It crushed Him; it broke His heart. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) **With His stripes we are healed.**—*The disease of sin:*—I. IT IS A WASTING DISEASE; it bringeth the soul into a languishing condition, and wasteth the strength of it (Rom. v. 6). Sin hath weakened the soul in all the faculties of it, which all may discern and observe in themselves. II. IT IS A PAINFUL DISEASE, it woundeth the spirit (Prov. xviii. 14). Greatness of mind may support us under a wounded body, but when there is a breach made upon the conscience, what can relieve us then? But you will say, They that are most infected with sin feel little of this; how is it then so painful a disease? 1. If they feel it not, the greater is their danger; for stupid diseases are the worst, and usually most mortal. 2. The soul of a sinner never sits so easy but that he has his qualms and pangs of conscience, and that sometimes in the midst of jollity; as was the case of Belshazzar, while carousing in the cups of the temple. 3. Though they feel not the diseases now, they shall hereafter. III. IT IS A LOATHSOME DISEASE. IV. IT IS AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE. Sin cometh into the world by propagation rather than imitation: yet imitation and example hath a great force upon the soul. V. IT IS A MORTAL DISEASE, if we continue in it without repentance. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Recovery by Christ's stripes:*—1. None but Christ can cure us, for He is the Physician of souls. 2. Christ cureth us not by doctrine and example only, but by merit and suffering. We are healed by "His stripes." 3. Christ's merit and sufferings do effect our cure, as they purchased the Spirit for us, who reneweth and healeth our sick souls (Titus iii. 5, 6). (*Ibid.*) *Healed by Christ's stripes:*—"With His stripes we are healed." We are healed—of our inattention and unconcern about Divine things. Of our ignorance and unbelief respecting these things. Of the disease of self-righteousness and self-confidence. Of our love to sin, and commission of it. Of our love to the riches, honours and pleasures of this world. Of our self-indulgence and self-seeking. Of our lukewarmness and sloth. Of our cowardice and fear of suffering (1 Pet. iv. 1). Of our diffidence and distrust, with respect to the mercy of God, and His pardoning and accepting the penitent. Of an accusing conscience, and slavish fear of God, and of death and hell. Of our general depravity and corruption of nature. Of our weakness and inability; His sufferings having purchased for us "the Spirit of might." Of our distresses and misery, both present and future. (*J. Benson, D.D.*) *His stripes:*—This chapter is not mainly an indictment. It is a Gospel. It declares in glad while solemn language that, terrible as sin is, it has been dealt with. The prophet dwells purposely upon the varied manifestations of the evil in order to emphasize the varied forms and absolute completeness of its conquest. He prolongs the agony that he may prolong the rapture. I. OUR NEED OF HEALING. There is no figure which more aptly represents the serious nature and terrible consequences of sin than this one of bodily sickness. We know how it prostrates us, takes the brightness out of life, and, unless attended to, cuts life short. Sickness in its acutest form is a type in the body of sin in the soul. Sin is a mortal disease of the spirit. A common Scriptural emblem for it, found in both Old and New Testaments, is leprosy—the most

frightful disease imaginable, loathsome to the observer and intolerably painful to the sufferer, attacking successively and rotting every limb of the body, and issuing slowly but certainly in death. 1. It is complicated. It affects every part of the moral being. It is blindness to holiness, and deafness to the appeals of God. There is a malady known as ossification of the heart, by which the living and beating heart is slowly turned to a substance like bone. It is a type of the complaint of the sinner. His heart is hard and impenitent. He suffers, too, from the fever of unhallowed desire. The lethargy of spiritual indifference is one of his symptoms; a depraved appetite, by which he tries to feed his immortal soul on husks, is another; while his whole condition is one of extreme debility—absence of strength to do right. In another part of the book our prophet diagnoses more thoroughly the disease of which he here speaks (chap. i. 5, 6). No hospital contains a spectacle so sickening and saddening as the unregenerate human heart. 2. The disease is universal. "There is none righteous; no, not one." What the Bible declares, experience confirms. The ancient world, speaking through a noble literature that has come down to us, confesses many times the condition expressed by Ovid, "I see and approve the better things, while I follow those which are worse." Christendom finds its mouthpiece in the apostle Paul, who, speaking of himself apart from the help of Christ, mournfully says, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." And modern culture reveals its deepest consciousness in the words of Lowell, the ambassador-poet, "In my own heart I find the worst man's mate." It is a feature of the malady that the patient is often insensible to it. But from every lip there is at least occasional confession of some of its symptoms. There is discomfort in the conscience; there is dissatisfaction at the heart; and there is dread in the face of death and the unknown beyond. The Scriptures are the Röntgen rays of God, and their searching light reveals behind an uneasy conscience, behind a dissatisfied heart, behind the fear of death, behind all the sorrows and evils of life, that which is their primary cause—the malady of sin. 3. This disease is incurable—that is, apart from the healing described in the text. "The end of these things is death"—spiritual death; insensibility to God, and absence of the life of fellowship with Him which is life indeed—physical death, in so far as that natural process is more than mere bodily dissolution, and is a fearful and hopeless leap into the dark; for "the sting of death is sin"—and eternal death. Men are great at quack remedies, and the world is equally flooded with nostrums for the disease of sin. And what is the result of these loudly-hawked specifics? They are as useless as the charms which our grandmothers used to scare away diseases. The Physician is He who gave His back to the smiters; the balm is the blood which flowed from "His stripes." II. OUR MEANS OF HEALING. "With His stripes." "Stripes" does not mean the lashes that fell on His back, but the weals which they left. We remember how He "suffered under Pontius Pilate" before He "was crucified, dead and buried." His back was bared, His hands were tied to a low post, and a coarse, muscular giant flourished a whip above Him. It was a diabolical instrument, that Roman whip—made of leather with many thongs, and in the end of each of them a piece of iron, or bone, or stone. Every stroke fetched blood and ripped open the quivering flesh. The Jewish law forbade more than forty stripes being given, but Christ was scourged by Romans, who recognized no such merciful limit. But as we know that Pilate intended the scourging to be a substitute for crucifixion, and hoped that its severity would so melt the Jews to pity that they would not press for the worse punishment—which end, however, was not reached—we may infer that He was scourged until He could bear no more, until He could not stand, until He fell mangled and fainting at His torturer's feet. Nearly two thousand years have passed since that awful affliction, but its significance is eternal. But how can the sufferings of one alleviate the sufferings of another? 1. Because the sight of them moves us to sorrow. There are certain maladies of the mind and heart for which there is hope if the emotions can be stirred and the patient made to laugh or cry. There is hope for the sinner when the thought of his sin melts his heart to sorrow and his eyes to tears. Sorrow for sin—repentance of wrong-doing—is the first stage in recovery. And there is nothing that will cause penitence like a sight of the Saviour's wounds. 2. The sight of them relieves our consciences. For as we look at those livid weals we know He did not deserve them. We know that we did merit punishment direr far. And we know that He endured them, and more mysterious agonies of which they were the outward sign, in our stead. Then, gradually, we draw the inference. If He suffered for us, we are free. If our load was laid on Him, it is no longer upon us. Conscience accepts that logic. 3. The sight of them prevents further

outbreaks. This cure is radical. It not only heals, it also strengthens. It gradually raises the system above its tendency to sin. For the more we gaze upon those livid stripes, the more intolerable and hateful sin, which caused them, appears, and the more difficult it becomes for us to indulge in it. Our medicine is also a strong tonic, which invigorates the spiritual nature and fortifies its weaknesses. Stanley, in one of his books on African travel, tells of the crime of Uledi, his native coxswain, and what came of it. Uledi was deservedly popular for his ability and courage, but having robbed his master, a jury of his fellows condemned him to receive "a terrible flogging." Then uprose his brother, Shumari, who said, "Uledi has done very wrong; but no one can accuse me of wrong-doing. Now, mates, let me take half the whipping. I will cheerfully endure it for the sake of my brother." Scarcely had he finished when another arose, and said, "Uledi has been the father of the boat boys. He has many times risked his life to save others; and he is my cousin; and yet he ought to be punished. Shumari says he will take half the punishment; and now let me take the other half, and let Uledi go free." Surely the heart of the guilty man must have been touched, and the willing submission by others to the punishment he had merited must have restrained him from further outbreaks as the strict infliction of the original penalty never could. By those stripes he would be healed. Even so, the stripes of our Lord deliver us from the very tendency to sin. For the disease to be healed the medicine must be taken. Our very words "recipe" and "receipt" remind us of this. They are related, and signify "to take." The selfsame word describes the means of cure, and commands that it be used. Look upon His wounds! And let those of us who have looked for our cure, still look for our strengthening. We should not have so many touches of the old complaint if we thought oftener of the stripes by which we are healed. Look all through life, and you will grow stronger and holier. (*B. J. Gibbon.*) *The universal remedy:*—Not merely His bleeding wounds, but even those blue bruises of His flesh help to heal us. There are none quite free from spiritual diseases. One may be saying, "Mine is a weak faith;" another may confess, "Mine is distracted thoughts;" another may exclaim, "Mine is coldness of love;" and a fourth may have to lament his powerlessness in prayer. One remedy in natural things will not suffice for all diseases; but there is a catholicon, a universal remedy, provided in the Word of God for all spiritual sicknesses, and that is contained in the few words—"With His stripes we are healed." I. THE MEDICINE ITSELF WHICH IS HERE PRESCRIBED—the stripes of our Saviour. By the term "stripes," no doubt the prophet understood here, first, literally, those stripes which fell upon our Lord's shoulders when He was beaten of the Jews, and afterwards scourged of the Roman soldiery. But the words intend far more than this. No doubt with his prophetic eye Isaiah saw the stripes from that unseen scourge held in the Father's hand which fell upon His nobler inner nature when His soul was scourged for sin. It is by these that our souls are healed. "But why?" First, then, because our Lord, as a sufferer, was not a private person, but suffered as a public individual, and an appointed representative. Our Lord was not merely man, or else His sufferings could not have availed for the multitude who now are healed thereby. He was God as well as man. Our Saviour's sufferings heal us of the curse by being presented before God as a substitute for what we owe to His Divine law. But healing is a work that is carried on within, and the text rather leads me to speak of the effect of the stripes of Christ upon our characters and natures than upon the result produced in our position before God. II. THE MATCHLESS CURES WROUGHT BY THIS REMARKABLE MEDICINE. Look at two pictures. Look at man without the stricken Saviour; and then behold man with the Saviour, healed by His stripes. III. THE MALADIES WHICH THIS WONDROUS MEDICINE REMOVES. 1. The mania of despair. 2. The stony heart. 3. The paralysis of doubt. 4. A stiffness of the knee-joint of prayer. 5. Numbness of soul. 6. The fever of pride. 7. The leprosy of selfishness. 8. Anger. 9. The fretting consumption of worldliness. 10. The cancer of covetousness. IV. THE CURATIVE PROPERTIES OF THE MEDICINE. 1. It arrests spiritual disorder. 2. It quickens all the powers of the spiritual man to resist the disease. 3. It restores to the man that which he lost in strength by sin. 4. It soothes the agony of conviction. 5. It has an eradicating power as to sin. V. THE MODES OF THE WORKING OF THIS MEDICINE. The sinner hearing of the death of the incarnate God is led by the force of truth and the power of the Holy Spirit to believe in the incarnate God. The cure is already begun. After faith come gratitude, love, obedience. VI. ITS REMARKABLY EASY APPLICATION. VII. Since the medicine is so efficacious, since it is already prepared and freely presented, I do beseech you TAKE IT. Take it, you who have known its power in years gone by.

Let not backslidings continue, but come to His stripes afresh. Take it, ye doubters, lest ye sink into despair; come to His stripes anew. Take it, ye who are beginning to be self-confident and proud. And, O ye who have never believed in Him, come and trust in Him, and you shall live. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A simple remedy:*—I. THESE ARE SAD WORDS. They are part of a mournful piece of music, which might be called "the requiem of the Messiah." 1. These are sad words because they imply disease. 2. There is a second sorrow in the verse, and that is sorrow for the suffering by which we are healed. There was a cruel process in the English navy, in which men were made to run the gauntlet all along the ship, with sailors on each side, each man being bound to give a stroke to the poor victim as he ran along. Our Saviour's life was a running of the gauntlet between His enemies and His friends, who all struck Him, one here and another there. Satan, too, struck at him. II. THESE ARE GLAD WORDS. 1. Because they speak of healing. 2. There is another joy in the text—joy in the honour which it brings to Christ. III. THESE ARE SUGGESTIVE WORDS. Whenever a man is healed through the stripes of Jesus, the instincts of his nature should make him say, "I will spend the strength I have, as a healed man, for Him who healed me." (*Ibid.*) *Christopathy:*—I. GOD HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE. Sin is a disease—1. Because it is not an essential part of man as he was created. It is something abnormal. 2. Because it puts all the faculties out of gear. 3. Because it weakens the moral energy, just as many diseases weaken the sick person's body. 4. Because it either causes great pain, or deadens all sensibility, as the case may be. 5. Because it frequently produces a manifest pollution. 6. Because it tends to increase in the man, and will one day prove fatal to him. II. GOD HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED. 1. Behold the heavenly medicine. 2. Remember that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious. 3. Accept this atonement and you are saved by it. 4. Let nothing of your own interfere with the Divine remedy. Prayer does not heal, but it asks for the remedy. It is not trust that heals; that is man's application of the remedy. Repentance is not what cures, it is a part of the cure, one of the first tokens that the blessed medicine has begun to work in the soul. The healing of a sinner does not lie in himself, nor in what he is, nor in what he feels, nor in what he does, nor in what he vows, nor in what he promises. It is in His stripes that the healing lies. III. THE REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE. How are we healed? 1. Our conscience is healed of every smart. 2. Our heart is healed of its love of sin. 3. Our life is healed of its rebellion. 4. Our consciousness assures us that we are healed. If you are healed by His stripes you should go and live like healthy men. (*Ibid.*) *Healed by Christ's stripes:*—Mr. Mackay, of Hull, told of a person who was under very deep concern of soul. Taking the Bible into his hand, he said to himself, "Eternal life is to be found somewhere in this Word of God; and, if it be here, I will find it, for I will read the Book right through, praying to God over every page of it, if perchance it may contain some saving message for me." The earnest seeker read on through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and so on; and though Christ is there very evidently, he could not find Him in the types and symbols. Neither did the holy histories yield him comfort, nor the Book of Job. He passed through the Psalms, but did not find his Saviour there; and the same was the case with the other books till he reached Isaiah. In this prophet he read on till near the end, and then in the fifty-third chapter, these words arrested his delighted attention, "With His stripes we are healed." "Now I have found it," says he. "Here is the healing that I need for my sin-sick soul, and I see how it comes to me through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name, I am healed!" (*Ibid.*) *Self-sufficiency prevents healing:*—I saw a pedlar one day, as I was walking out; he was selling walking-sticks. He followed me, and offered me one of the sticks. I showed him mine—a far better one than any he had to sell—and he withdrew at once. He could see that I was not likely to be a purchaser. I have often thought of that when I have been preaching: I show men the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, but they show me their own, and all hope of dealing with them is gone. Unless I can prove that their righteousness is worthless, they will not seek the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, that the Lord would show you your disease, and then you would desire the remedy! (*Ibid.*) *Sin deadens sensibility:*—It frequently happens that, the more sinful a man is, the less he is conscious of it. It was remarked of a certain notorious criminal that many thought him innocent because, when he was charged with murder, he did not betray the least emotion. In that wretched self-possession there was to my mind presumptive proof of his great familiarity with crime; if an innocent person is charged with a great offence, the mere charge horrifies him. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. **All we like sheep have gone astray.**—*Astray from the fold:*—I. The first part of my text is AN INDICTMENT. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Says some one, "Can't you drop the first word?" And some one rises and looks off and says, "There is a man who is a blasphemer, he is astray. Yonder is a man who is impure, he is astray. Yonder is a man who is fraudulent, he is astray." Look at home, for the first word of the text takes you and me as well as the rest. 1. I have studied the habits of sheep, and I know they lose their way sometimes by trying to get other pasture. There are many of you who have been looking for better pasture. You have wandered on and on. You tried business successes, you tried worldly associations, you tried the club-house. You said that the Church was a short commons, and you wanted to find the rank grass on the bank of distant streams, and to lie down under great oaks on the other side of the hills. Have you found the anticipated pasture that was to be so superior? 2. I have noticed, also, that the sheep get astray by being frightened with dogs. Oh, man, that is the way you got astray. You said, "Where is God, that He allows an honest man to go down, and thieves to prosper?" You were dogged by creditors; and some of you went into misanthropy, and some of you took to strong drink, and some of you fled from all Christian associations; and in that way the sheep got astray. II. But the last part of my text OPENS A DOOR WIDE ENOUGH TO LET US ALL OUT, and wide enough to let all heaven in. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Says some one, "That is not generous. Let every one bear his own burden." And there is something in that. If I owe a debt, and I have money to pay it, and I come to you and ask you to cancel my obligations, you will be right in saying to me, "Pay your own debts." If I am walking along the street with you, and we are both hale and hearty, and I want you to carry me, you are right in saying, "Walk on your own feet." But suppose you and I were in a regiment together, and I was fearfully wounded in the battle, and I fell unconscious at your feet with gunshot fractures and dislocations, five bullets having struck me at once—you would say to your comrades, "Here, this man is helpless. Let us carry him to the ambulance; let us take him out to the hospital." Would it have been mean to let you carry me then? You certainly would not have been so unkind as not to carry me. Now, that is Christ to the soul. If we could pay our spiritual obligations we might go up to God and say, "Lord, there is so much debt, and here I have the means with which to cancel it. Now cross it all out." But the fact is we are pierced through and through with the sabres of sin. We have gone down under the hot fire, and we are helpless and undone. We will die on the field unless some help comes to us. God sends His ambulance, yea, He dispatches His only Son to carry us out, and bind up our gashes, and take us home. Is there any man who is under the delusion that he can carry his own sins? You cannot. You might as well try to transport a boulder of the sea, or carry on one shoulder the Alleghanies, and on the other shoulder Mount Washington. Then let us shift the burden. (*T. de W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Salvation for the straying sheep:*—I. LOOK AT THE SHEEP THAT HAVE GONE ASTRAY. The text implies they were once in the fold. You cannot go astray except you have been in the right place first. II. EACH SHEEP WALKS ITS OWN PATH. There is almost an infinite variety in sinning. Some go along a path of licentiousness; others the money-making road; others the gamester's path; others take the Christless morality road. III. WHAT IS GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION? "The Lord laid on Him," etc. Who is that "Him"? The One described in the previous verses. Let Christ be the object of your trust, and you shall be saved. (*A. G. Brown.*) *Our misery and its remedy:*—I. OUR MISERY BY SIN. 1. Our sin is charged upon us collectively in common: we have all gone astray. 2. Distributively. "Every one to his own way." We all agree in turning aside from the right way of pleasing and enjoying of God; and we disagree, as each one hath a by-path of his own, some running after this lust, some after that, and so are not only divided from God, but divided from one another, while every one maketh his will his law. II. OUR REMEDY BY CHRIST. "The Lord hath laid," etc. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Departing from God:*—This departing from God and His ways is fitly represented by the straying of sheep. In the general it implieth—1. That we are brutish in our sin and defection from God: it could not be expressed but by a comparison fetched from the beasts. 2. Proneness to err. No creature is more prone to wander and lose his way than a sheep without a shepherd. 3. Our inability to return, or to bring ourselves into the right way again. 4. Our readiness to follow evil example. Sheep run one after another, and one straggler draweth away the whole flock. Austin saith, "I could wander by myself, and could not return by myself." And God saith as much

(Hosea xiii. 9). 5. The danger of straying sheep, which when out of the pasture are often in harm's way, and exposed to a thousand dangers (Jer. l. 6, 7). (*Ibid.*) **We have turned every one to his own way.**—*Every man to his own way:*—Though there be one path to heaven, yet there are several ways of sinning and going to hell. The reasons how this cometh to pass are—1. Because of the activeness of man's spirit. It is always a-devising wickedness. 2. It happeneth through diversity of constitution. 3. It happeneth from their business and occasions in the world. Many men are engaged to ways of sin because they suit best with their employments, the sin of their calling, as vainglory in a minister. 4. Custom and education. 5. Company and example. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *His own way:*—This is the sin of men in their natural condition, that they turn to their own way. The phrase implieth these two things—1. A defect or want of Divine guidance. 2. A rejection of the ways of God when made known to us. (*Ibid.*) *Caiaphas: Cephas: Jesus:*—The forms of human sinfulness are as numerous and varied as are men's natural inclinations: but near the cross may be found a representative of every one of these. Three figures will demand our attention—Caiaphas, the high priest, with his surroundings; and then, amidst the obscurity of the twilight scene, and the crowd of spectators, we must single out the figure of Simon, then at the moment of his deepest shame. And then, turning our eyes away from these subordinates, we must fix them lastly on Jesus of Nazareth Himself. I. CAIAPHAS is the president of the High Ecclesiastical Court then assembled, and no judge ever could produce higher credentials than he. The Gospels all acknowledge him, without the slightest apparent doubt, as the legitimate successor of Aaron. He is descendant of a priestly dynasty some 1,500 years old, whose origin was confessedly Divine. Besides, the highest power of all had owned his legitimate position, by giving to him the spirit of unconscious prophecy. Now the priesthood of Aaron, which he bore, had never been a bloodthirsty one. There are, I think, only two examples of that priesthood shedding blood. One of these was the stroke of the spear of Phinehas—an act of wild justice, suited to the times, which received praise and blessing from above; and the other, the just punishment by Jehoiada of Athaliah, who had murdered all the royal family but one. Whatever other faults they may have had, the priests, the sons of Aaron, had never erred before on the side of intolerance and cruelty. And Caiaphas himself was no fanatic. Like all the family to which he belonged, he was a Sadducee. He had the views of a politician rather than of an ecclesiatic; and, having coolly judged, several weeks before, that the proceedings of Jesus of Nazareth were politically dangerous, he had determined that it would be well to put Him out of the way. But, in the council that surrounded him, there were many, and perhaps a majority, of strong religious belief and feelings. So, for their sakes, he affected a horror which he could hardly have felt himself. The high priest asked Him, "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest rent his clothes—the original word in St. Mark seems to imply that one of these was the seamless tunic of the high priest—in sign of a horror, which can hardly have been otherwise than hypocritical in a cool man of the world like him, and said, "What need we any further witnesses. Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" And then the question being thus put, they all—the whole council, all the scribes, all the elders, all the chief priests, the whole representative body of the universal Church of God—condemned Him to be guilty of death. What a lesson for us arises out of this fact, that our Lord's death was wholly a sin of the religious world under the guidance of their Divinely-appointed leaders. And in that religious world we may distinguish all the chief tendencies both of that time and of all times—the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the liberal and the orthodox, the men with the minimum of belief in the supernatural, and those with the maximum of that belief, the traditionists and the anti-traditionists—in fact, the High Church, and the Broad Church, and the Low. The lesson is for our times. In those days authority and tradition utterly failed those who relied upon them, while the light within the heart lighted those who possessed it to the cross and to the glory of the Lord of Truth. II. Let us turn our eyes away now from Caiaphas and the splendid array around him to the lower end of the courtyard near the door, where the lower classes are collected. All these are within sight of the proceedings at the upper end of the hall, which no doubt is well lighted. Perhaps they are also near enough to hear. Amongst them is one whose speech betrays him to be a Galilean. We know his name (though those around him do not) to be SIMON, SON OF JONAS, who has also the surname

Cephas. He is thrice recognized as a follower of the accused, and thrice denies the charge. Then the cock crows at early morning, and the Master turns on him with a glance which he feels to single him out, even in the darkness and the crowd; and he goes out at the door, weeping bitterly. This strange character, so made up of contradictions as to have been pronounced by that Being who knew him best, at one moment a "rock," and at the next a Satan, full of boldness and full of cowardice, the first to confess and the first to deny; this picture of the weakness of all human strength, of the frailty of all earthly goodness, is now at the very depths of his weakness and shame. He stands there a sinner who has just committed a sin—a very mean and cowardly sin. Yet there is an eye upon him, searching for him, busied with him. We who have betrayed Him and denied Him, the Lord hath turned and looked on. He is seeking, let Him find. III. We see JESUS in the midst of all this crowd of representative sinners, amongst whom a little honest search will soon enable each of us to detect himself. Betrayed by covetous Judas, forsaken by unwatchful, unprayerful, and therefore easily tempted disciples, denied by self-confident, self-willed Simon, condemned by worldly-minded, unscrupulous Caiaphas, condemned again by timid time-serving Pilate, persecuted to the death by sanctimonious, theologically-hating Scribes and Pharisees, shouted at by a rude, ignorant multitude, tortured in cruel sport by barbarous soldiers—what species of human sin is absent there? Let us consider the exceeding beauty of the figure presented to us, and also how that figure is produced. Compare for one moment any character in a work of fiction. These, too, are beautiful, but how is their beauty produced? By word-painting of the most exquisite kind. But in the narratives of the Gospels there is no word-painting at all, except perhaps a little in St. John. It is not the narratives that are sublime, but the Being who becomes known to us through their simple inartificial language. And now the end of this should be, that every one of us should bring the matter as closely as possible home. It was all done for me; it was I that created the necessity. Let Him, in each of us, see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. (*W. E. Rawstorne, M.A.*) **The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**—*Sin laid on Jesus*:—1. The verse opens with a confession of sin common to all the persons intended in the verse. 2. The confession is also special and particular. 3. This confession is very unreserved. There is not a single syllable by way of excuse; there is not a word to detract from the force of the confession. 4. It is, moreover, singularly thoughtful, for thoughtless persons do not use a metaphor so appropriate as the text: "All we like sheep have gone astray." I hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three; but it is the most charming and the most full of comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned, and where sorrow reached her climax there it is that a weary soul finds sweetest rest. The Saviour bruised is the healing of bruised hearts. I. EXPOSITION. 1. It may be well to give the marginal translation of the text, "Jehovah hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." The first thought that demands notice is the meeting of sin. Sin I may compare to the rays of some evil sun. Sin was scattered throughout this world as abundantly as light, and Christ is made to suffer the full effect of the baleful rays which stream from the sun of sin. God as it were holds up a burning-glass, and concentrates all the scattered rays in a focus upon Christ. Take the text in our own version, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" put upon Him as a burden is laid upon a man's back all the burdens of all His people; put upon His head as the high priest of old laid upon the scapegoat all the sin of the beloved ones that he might bear them in his own person. The two translations are perfectly consistent; all sins are made to meet, and then having met together and been tied up in one crushing load the whole burden is laid upon Him. 2. The second thought is that sin was made to meet upon the suffering person of the innocent Substitute. 3. It has been asked, Was it just that sin should thus be laid upon Christ? We believe it was rightly so. (1) Because it was the act of Him who must do right. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (2) Remember, moreover, that Jesus Christ voluntarily took this sin upon Himself. (3) There was a relationship between our Lord and His people, which is too often forgotten, but which rendered it natural that He should bear the sin of His people. Why does the text speak of our sinning like sheep? I think it is because it would call to our recollection that Christ is our Shepherd. It is not that Christ took upon Himself the sins of strangers. There always was a union of a most mysterious and intimate kind between those who sinned

and the Christ who suffered. (4) This plan of salvation is precisely similar to the method of our ruin. The fall which made me a sinner was wholly accomplished long before I was born by the first Adam, and the salvation by which I am delivered was finished long before I saw the light by the second Adam on my behalf. 4. Lying upon Christ brought upon Him all the consequences connected with it. God cannot look where there is sin with any pleasure, and though as far as Jesus is personally concerned, He is the Father's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased; yet when He saw sin laid upon His Son, He made that Son cry, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" 5. Think of the result of all this. Sin meets on Christ and Christ is punished with sin, and what then? Sin is put away. 6. The "us" here intended. II. APPLICATION. There is a countless company whose sins the Lord Jesus bore; did He bear yours? Do you wish to have an answer? Let me read this verse to you and see if you can join in it. If there be in you a penitential confession which leads you to acknowledge that you have erred and strayed like a lost sheep; if there be in you a personal sense of sin which makes you feel that you have turned to your own way, and if now you can trust in Jesus, then a second question is not wanted; the Lord hath laid on Him your iniquity. III. CONTEMPLATION. I will give you four things to think of. 1. The astounding mass of sin that must have been laid on Christ. 2. The amazing love of Jesus which brought Him to do all this. 3. The matchless security which this plan of salvation offers. 4. What, then, are the claims of Jesus Christ upon you and me? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Going astray as sheep*:—1. The sheep is a creature exceedingly quick-witted upon the one matter of going astray. 2. The sheep goes astray, it is said, all the more frequently when it is most dangerous for it to do so; propensities to stray seem to be developed in the very proportion in which they ought to be subdued. Whereas in our own land a sheep might wander with some safety, it wanders less than it will do in the Oriental plains, where for it to go astray is to run risks from leopards and wolves. 3. The sheep goes astray ungratefully. It owes everything to the shepherd, and yet forsakes the hand that feeds it and heals its diseases. 4. The sheep goes astray repeatedly. If restored to-day it may not stray to-day if it cannot, but it will to-morrow if it can. 5. The sheep wanders further and further, from bad to worse. It is not content with the distance it has reached, it will go yet greater lengths; there is no limit to its wandering except its weakness. See ye not your own selves as in a mirror! (*Ibid.*) *Sin meeting on Jesus*:—I. THE MEETING-PLACE OF SIN IS THE CROSS OF CHRIST. In the margin these words are rendered, "The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." The Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Persian, and Egyptian tongues were spoken about that cross. The inscription was in different languages that all might read. This is the representation of the world now looking upon the Crucified. His embrace encircled the race of man. 1. The cross was the focus of sins. 2. The burdens of sin here meet. 3. Here the responsibilities of the sinner are assumed by one competent to discharge them. 4. The sufferings of the sinner are gathered in the agonies of the cross. II. THE MEETING-PLACE OF SIN IS THE MERCY-SEAT OF SINNERS. Conclusion: 1. The imperative claim Christ has upon the soul. 2. If you will not consent that your iniquities shall meet on Christ, bear them you must yourself. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*) *The nature and power of the atonement*:—1. It has been suggested that there was injustice in the sacrifice of One who had never sinned in the place of sinners, and that it involved the idea that God liked suffering for its own sake. This statement is one-sided: it forgets mercy, it shuts its eyes to the truth that the power of any sacrifice is in its voluntary and representative character. Facts must be respected, and what is the fact which is before us all? Pain and sorrow! 2. The vicarious sacrifice of Calvary is the work of the Three Persons of the Trinity. Men speak as if the Son devised the plan of His own death to save man from the Father's wrath. It was the work of the whole Three Persons in the Godhead. If the justice of the Divine life demanded the atonement, the mercy of the Divine love devised the means of pardon and the sacrifice on Calvary. 3. There is yet another thought which illuminates the gloom. We know the power of sin which, like some mysterious shape, some wild and wandering shadow in a forest, stands or flits about the portals of the opening life of man. Nature brings us within its reach, our own will places us in its iron grasp, it paralyzes the spiritual power, it chills our desires for better things; we cannot rise up as once we could when we are lying under the weight of unforgiven sin. This sense of the awfulness of sin illuminates the power of the atonement, for the sacrifice of the Son of God must at least be commensurate in its awfulness with what we know of human sin. 4. If the awfulness of sin and the

majesty of God bring home the sense of what vicarious sacrifice is, and we are able in its power to raise our hearts to God and to feel renewed life and holier aspirations, how about the past? Florence rose and wept over the grave of Dante, but Florence could not then undo the edict which banished the man, and Dante's ashes rest beside the pinewoods and the Adrian Sea, and Florence is undone. And for each of you there was a day when you told your first lie, a day when you acted your first pretence, a day when you did your first act of dishonesty, when you first degraded yourself with some burning vice and destroyed the innocency which God had given you. In your better moments you look back to such a day, and you feel as if you were standing by an open grave, as you remember the hard words, the unkind looks, the want of sympathy, to him or her who lies beneath. The past is gone beyond recall. How will you meet it? With scorn? Will you turn away and drown its memories in pleasure? You cannot. You have a spirit born for eternity. But there is one other way. Christ on the Cross bore man's sin in all its intensity, gave Himself as a sacrifice, and purchased for the race complete forgiveness. No sorrow is so deep but He can assuage it, no memory so black but He can cleanse it. (*W. J. Knox-Little, M.A.*) *The universal burden and its bearer:*—It is of prime importance to mark that the only office which the prophet describes the Servant as filling is the function of suffering. He is neither Teacher nor Conqueror nor Lawgiver nor, here, King; he is only a Sufferer. That is what the Saviour of the world has to be, first of all. The rabbis have a legend, far wiser than most of their follies, which tells how Messias is to be found sitting amongst the lepers at the gate of the city. The fable has in it the deep truth that He who saves the world must suffer with, and for, the world He saves. I. CONSIDER THE UNIVERSAL BURDEN. Of course the speakers in my text are primarily the penitent Jewish nation, who at last have learned how much at first they had misunderstood the Servant of the Lord. But the "we" and the "all" may very fairly be widened out so as to include the whole world, and every individual of the race, and iniquity is the universal burden of us all. I believe that almost all of the mistaken and unworthy conceptions of Christianity which have afflicted and do afflict the world are directly traceable to this—the failure to apprehend the radical fact affecting men's condition that they are all sinful, and therefore separated from God. The evil that we do, going forth from us as deed, comes back upon us as guilt. And so, we are all staggering under this burden. The creatures that live at the bottom of the doleful sea, fathoms deeper than plummet has ever sounded, have to bear a pressure upon their frames all inconceivable by the men that walk upon the surface of the earth. And the deeper a man goes in the dark ocean of wrongdoing and wrongbeing, the heavier the weight of the compressed atmosphere above him, crushing him in. And, yet, like those creatures that crawl on the slime, miles down in the dreary sea, where no light has come, they know not the weight that rests upon them, and never have dreamed of how blessed it is to walk in the lighter air with the sun shining above them. There are some of you, grovelling down at the bottom of the ocean, to whom the liberty and illumination, the lightness and lightsomeness of the pure life which is possible, would seem miraculous. If these things be at all true, then it seems to me that the fact of universal sinfulness, with all its necessary, natural, and inevitable consequences, must be the all-important fact about a man. What we think about sin will settle all our religious ideas. II. LOOK AT THE ONE BEARER OF THE BURDEN. "The Lord has made to light upon Him the iniquity of us all." III. MARK THE MEN THAT ARE FREED FROM THE BURDEN. "Us all." And yet it is possible for a man included in the "all" to have to stagger along through life under his burden, and to carry it with him when he goes hence. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," says the foremost preacher of the doctrine that Christ's death takes away sin. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Every man shall bear his own burden." So your sins, taken away as they are by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, may yet cling to you and crush you. There is only one way by which the possibilities open to all men by the death of Jesus Christ may become the actual experience of every man, or of any man—and that is, the simple laying your burden, by your own act of quiet trust, upon the shoulders of Him that is mighty to save. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *God's forgiving love in Christ:*—Rev. G. Barber, assistant to Dr. Dale of Birmingham says: I remember going to him on one occasion in great distress; I wanted to preach on "Christ died for our sins," and I thought that if I could only show how, through the death of Christ, it was made possible for God to forgive sin, many whom I knew might be led to believe. He replied: Give up

troubling, my friend, about how it was possible for God to forgive sin, and go straight and tell the people that God does forgive sin, and tell them straight that Christ died for their sins. It is the fact the people want most to know, and not your theory, nor mine, as to how it was or is possible." (*Life of R. W. Dale.*) *Peace in the true knowledge of Jesus:*—I was sent for to see a lady—a stranger—who was dying in Brighton. I found her to be a person of means and education, but quite ignorant of the salient facts of the Christian faith. To her, Jesus was simply a great moral teacher, standing in line with other religious masters. Of Christianity, as the religion of redemption, she had no knowledge. Her life story had been a sad one, stained deeply by both sorrow and sin. "Oh," she sighed, "that it were possible for some great, strong friend to take my conscience as though it were his own, that I might have a little peace!" I learned more from that sentence concerning the mystery of redemption than up to that moment I had ever thought of. Here was a soul who knew and stated the need of just such a salvation as we are bidden to proclaim. She asked, without knowing that there was any answer, for the Saviour who was made sin for us, who could take man's conscience as though it were His own and leave in its place His peace. The sense of guilt had awakened with power in this poor dying woman. To have told her that the Most High could forgive her sins would have carried no comfort to her heart. The only possible relief for her was to hear of Him on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **He was oppressed.**—*Christ's sufferings and His deportment under them:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE SUFFERINGS. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted." II. THE CARRIAGE OF CHRIST UNDER THEM. "He opened not His mouth," which is amplified and illustrated by two similitudes, of a lamb going to the slaughter, and a sheep before her shearers. 1. "He opened not His mouth." This shows two things. (1) The great patience of Christ. (2) His great love to man, shown in His wonderful silence, even when He might justly have spoken in His own defence, but would not seem to interrupt the design of God. 2. The particular resemblance. (1) "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." It is an emblem of innocence, meekness, and patience. It may import weakness and slenderness of appearance in the world. Christ is nothing in show, though mighty in power. It noteth the meekness and sweetness of Christ, willingly yielding to be a sacrifice for us. (2) "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Christ did not open His mouth, unless to pray, instruct, and reprove. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Christ's patience in suffering:*—Christ upon the Cross is as a doctor in his chair, where He readeth unto us all a lecture of patience. (*J. Trapp.*) *The monarch surrenders Himself:*—In vers. 7, 8 there are five specific predictions:—(1) That the Messiah would be subject to oppression. (2) That amidst the oppression He would maintain silence. (3) That from the midst of oppression and judicial procedure He would be hurried off. (4) That beneath all the outer incidents in which men had a hand, there would be another work going on of which the men of His generation would never dream. (5) That this work, unthought of by His generation, was, that He was being "stricken for them." How each of these predictions was fulfilled in the event we know. It will be simplest for us, as we stand this side of the history, to note the several points as history. 1. The oppression to which Christ was subjected was of no ordinary kind. The first three Gospels indicate to some extent the spirit of hostility which animated the people, though in the fourth Gospel the advancing stages of that hostility are most clearly marked. At the last we find Jesus hurried off to trial. There were two trials: first, the Jewish, and then the Roman one. In the first, so far was the mind of the accusers set against Christ, that neither the fairness nor even the form of proper judicial procedure was observed. In the facts of (1) the trial being begun, continued, and finished, apparently, in the course of one night, (2) witnesses against the accused being sought for by the judges, (3) the evidence of one witness not being sustained by another, (4) questions being put to the accused which Hebrew law did not sanction, (5) a demand being made for confession, which Jewish doctors expressly forbade, and (6) all being followed by a sentence pronounced twenty-four hours too soon—in all these six main features the Jewish "trial" was an outrage on Hebrew law. Nor was the second trial a whit more in accordance with the rules of Roman procedure. In the first trial the point of law was, the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God; and, without any proof, that was pronounced invalid, and therefore blasphemous. In the Roman accusation the question concerned the claim of Christ to be a king; and the point on which the

whole matter turned was this, "Did Christ's Kingdom clash with Cæsar's rights?" And though the Lord Jesus had expressed Himself with a clearness on this point which ought to have made mistake impossible, yet men came with lies on their lips to charge Him with plotting against the Roman Government. Pilate, the governor, who shows by turns indecision, complaisance, bluster and subserviency, evasion, protest, compromise, superstitious dread, conscientious reluctance, cautious duplicity and sheer moral cowardice—is overcome at last, and decides against his knowledge to please the people, perhaps (as men on the incline of scepticism must sooner or later be) "stricken with inward paralysis from want of a motive and a hope." It would not be easy to say in which of the two trials the injustice was the more glaring; there was a more striking violation of form in the Hebrew trial; but, perhaps, a grosser violation of conscience in the president at the Roman one. 2. Amid this oppression there was no defence of Himself. Once He called attention to His rights as a Hebrew; once and again He reaffirmed His claims when challenged on oath. But "when He was reviled, He reviled not again." Why this silence? He knew His hour was come, and He yielded Himself to the stroke. He knew that His words would not tell rightly on His accusers in the state of mind which they cherished. With the far-distant future before Him, He saw that the sequel would vindicate His honour, and He could wait. He loved, too, to show patience rather than to display power; and He would show us the Divine grandeur of keeping power in reserve. 3. Underlying all this there was a Divine purpose being wrought out, of which the men of that generation had no conception. Man meant one thing, God was intending another. 4. This great work, of which the men of that generation never dreamt, was that the Messiah was cut off, "a stroke for them," for the people who sought His life and crucified Him. Let us, then, (1) Give the full and loving consent of our hearts to this Divine arrangement. (2) Learn to see sin in the light in which God views it. (3) Live a life of faith on Jesus Christ as being ever in His own glorious person our atoning sacrifice. (4) Be perpetually thankful and devoted to Him who consented to lay down His life for us. (5) Imitate our Saviour. In its relation to the government of God, the sacrifice of Christ must ever stand absolutely alone. But in that aspect of it which represented fidelity to the truth, and devotion to man, we can imitate it, even though at a far remove. It is precisely in connection with this view of it that Peter tells us, He "left us an example that we should follow His steps." But how can we follow such steps? By patience under wrong. By being willing to renounce our own ease and comfort, if thereby we may advance the welfare of others. By taking the sorrows of others on ourselves, not only by suffering for them, but by suffering with them. Suffering for others is the divinest form of life in a sinful world. By bearing others on our hearts in prayer, even though they may be our bitterest foes. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) **Yet He opened not His mouth.**—*The silence of Christ* (with Matt. xxvi. 63, xxvii. 14):—What can be said of the silence of Christ? Much has been said of the words He spake, and too much can never be said of them, for He spake as never man spake. Much has been said of the sacrifice He made. Much has been said of His miracles, etc., but how little of His silence, and yet how full of meaning to every thoughtful and inquiring mind. I. IT WAS WONDERFUL. Wonderful that Christ should remain silent, especially under false accusations—false witnesses giving testimony against Him, and a wicked judge about to deliver the charge. He who could with one word have made the world tremble, witnesses, judge and jury fall dead before Him, testifying to His innocence as well as His Divinity by their lifeless bodies. The silent years of Christ—how wonderful! He who knew so well how to speak and what to say. But we can understand something of this—it was a time of restraint, of growth, of preparation. But the preparation is over and Christ Jesus has asserted Himself. He has declared Himself by His life and by miracles to be the Son of God. He is falsely and basely accused, declared an impostor, sentenced and condemned to die, scourged mocked and spit upon, arrayed in a gorgeous robe and finally crucified, but silent amid it all. Do you ask why? The wonder is only increased. It was for our sake. II. HIS SILENCE WAS FULL OF SUFFERING, suffering that was vicarious and expiatory. We are not to attribute the justification of sinners to the death of Christ alone. It was the sinless purity of perfect obedience of His whole life. III. IT WAS OMINOUS; that is full of foreboding, portentous, inauspicious, foreshowing ills. It told of the utter degradation of the men before whom He stood. He had already said and done everything that was necessary to establish His claims to the Messiahship. His silence said, what more can I do unto My vineyard than I have already done unto it, and having done all He could do, He answered now to never a word.

It is an appalling sign when Christ ceases to plead with any of us. It shows that we have seared our hearts—that we are bent on ruin. IV. CHRIST'S SILENCE WAS INSPIRED, and therefore full of instruction as well as the words He spake. I refer now to the general silence of Christ. If His words were inspired must not His silence have been also? It is absolutely inconceivable that He who is Himself the Truth could have connived at heresy in any of the great doctrines He taught, or desired that should be taught even through silence. 1. Take the great doctrine of our Lord's Deity, and was it not the very question under dispute and for which He had been accused "of making Himself equal with God"? Now this fundamental doctrine is established by a vast and varied mass of evidence, but no stronger proof of it is anywhere to be found, as it seems to me, than that to be drawn from the silence of Christ. We know how Peter checked the homage of Cornelius, and how the angel shrank in alarm from the worship which John offered him. But Christ never acted so; He held His peace; He spake not a word. He never so much as hinted that this devotion should not be paid Him, and when His enemies accused Him of making Himself equal with God, He did not repel the charge with horror. Meek and lowly as He was He accepted all the worship that men offered Him; He welcomed it, and by His silent approval seemed to claim it. 2. Apply it to the authenticity of the Old Testament Scriptures, and what an argument we find! He held His peace in regard to all these criticisms that are being made. He condemned the unscriptural traditions of the Jews, but He at no time questioned the purity or integrity of the Old Testament Canon. 3. Apply His silence to the perpetuity of the Sabbath law and with what force it speaks. There are those amongst us who maintain that the Sabbath was only an institution for the Jews, and that its observance is not binding now under the Christian dispensation, but Christ nowhere says so. He often spoke in reference to Sabbath observance. He found the Sabbath a standing ordinance of God, and He left it such, only freshened by the dew of His blessing. V. CHRIST'S SILENCE WAS BEAUTIFUL, especially during His dread trial. It is difficult to speak aright amid enemies and detractors, but it is even more difficult to be silent right before them. The lip is ever ready to curl unbidden, the light of malice hurries to the eye, in a moment the crimson of anger mounts to the cheek before we are aware, but not so with Christ. VI. CHRIST'S SILENCE IS EXEMPLARY TO US ALL. Self-imposed silence often becomes a duty. There are calumnies good men cannot refute. There are accusations which they must leave unanswered. 1. Because of the perils of speech. In self-justification we are liable to self-glorification, to irritability, to extravagance. 2. Because of the blessings of the discipline of silence. If we spend our time in self-vindication, then farewell labour for Christ, for we will have no time for anything else. (*J. I. Blackburn.*) *Silent suffering:*—Is it not always true with those that are called to suffer that they suffer most at times when one hears no sound from their lips? It is considered a relief to cry out in the midst of pain. So long as one can plead his case the excitement of pleading enables him to forget the painfulness of his position. When the tongue is silent then it is that the brain is busy. What must have been the thoughts of Christ when He held His peace? Must they not have been of the most painful nature? The silence of Christ was full of the most awful suffering and that suffering was expiatory and vicarious. Because He was wounded, we are healed; and because He kept silent before this earthly tribunal, we shall hereafter speak. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's speechlessness:*—Why this speechlessness? In part it was due to the Saviour's clear apprehension of the futility of arguing with those who were bent on crucifying Him. It was also due to the quiet rest of His soul on God, as He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously, and anticipated the hour when the Father would arise to give Him a complete vindication. But it was due also to His consciousness of carrying in His breast a golden secret, another explanation of His sufferings than men were aware of, a Divine solution of the mystery of human guilt. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.**—*The sufferings of Christ:*—St. Peter makes it almost a description of a Christian, that he loves Him whom he has not seen. Unless we have a true love of Christ, we are not His true disciples; and we cannot love Him unless we have heartfelt gratitude to Him; and we cannot duly feel gratitude, unless we feel keenly what He suffered for us. No one who will but solemnly think over the history of those sufferings, as drawn out for us in the Gospels, but will gradually gain, through God's grace, a sense of them. 1. As to these sufferings, our Lord is called a lamb in the text; He was as defenceless, and as innocent as a lamb is. Since then Scripture compares Him to this inoffensive and unprotected animal, we may, without

presumption or irreverence, take the image as a means of conveying to our minds those feelings which our Lord's sufferings should excite within us. Consider how very horrible it is to read the accounts which sometimes meet us of cruelties exercised on brute animals. What is it moves our very hearts, and sickens us so much at cruelty shown to poor brutes? First, that they have done no harm; next, that they have no power whatever of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which makes their sufferings so especially touching. He who is higher than the angels, deigned to humble Himself even to the state of the brute creation. 2. Take another example, and you will see the same thing still more strikingly. How overpowered should we be, nay not at the sight only, but at the very hearing of cruelties shown to a little child, and why so? for the same two reasons, because it was so innocent, and because it was so unable to defend itself. You feel the horror of this, and yet you can bear to read of Christ's sufferings without horror. Our Lord was not only guiltless and defenceless, but He had come among His persecutors in love. 3. And now, let us suppose that some venerable person whom we have known as long as we could recollect any thing, and loved and reverenced, suppose such a one, who had often done us kindnesses, rudely seized by fierce men, made a laughing-stock, struck, spit on, severely scourged and at last exposed with all his wounds to the gaze of a rude multitude who came and jeered him, what would be our feelings? But what is all this to the suffering of the holy Jesus, which we bear to read of as a matter of course! A spirit of grief and lamentation is expressly mentioned in Scripture as a characteristic of those who turn to Christ. If then we do not sorrow, have we turned to Him? (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *Christ the victim and the example:*—1. There is only One in whom are fulfilled all the prophecies of this wonderful Lesson (Acts viii. 34, 35). 2. It may be noticed how animals are chosen in Holy Scripture as symbols of Divine Persons and mysteries; and Christian art has perpetuated the association. The dove has been the symbol of the Holy Ghost from earliest times. The man, the calf, the lion, and the eagle represent the four Evangelists, and are types of the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. Christ is represented by a lamb, for this was the symbol of our Lord both in the Old Testament and the New. Indeed, it was such a popular symbol in the early ages of the Church, that authority was invoked to check it as a substitute for His human body. 3. Throughout Holy Scripture, by hints and prophecies, by types and fulfilment, Christ is depicted by the lamb (Gen. xxii. 8; the Paschal lamb; the daily sacrifice in the temple; St. John's exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!" John xix. 36; 1 Cor. v. 7; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 6, 12; vi. 1; vii. 14, etc.). The symbol has two aspects—that of the victim, and that of the example. Let us look at it in both lights. I. THE VICTIM. 1. The text expresses the willingness of the Sufferer. "He was ill-treated whilst He bowed Himself," *i. e.* "suffered voluntarily," as the simile of the unresisting animal explains. It is a prophecy of the self-oblation of Christ (John x. 15, 18). The oblation was the result of love. He was led to the slaughter with the full knowledge of all that was before Him. The voluntariness of Christ's sufferings is a ground of merit and a secret of attractiveness. Sacrifice must "be the blood of the soul," the offered will, to have value before God; and it must be spontaneous, to touch and win the hearts of men. 2. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" reminds us of the greatness of Christ's sufferings. He was "obedient unto death," a sacrificial death—different from a mere martyr's death, as the words just before the text show. The Lord had laid on Him the punishment of Israel's guilt—nay, "the iniquity of us all." There can be no getting rid of "the *pœna vicaria* here" (Delitzsch). This is a great mystery. But it is not one man suffering for another, for "no man can deliver his brother;" but God Himself in man's nature suffering. Those who think such a mode of redemption unjust, it will be found, have not grasped the dogma of the Incarnation, or the oneness of will in the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. It was an act of love. Death is the test of love, and the worst kind of death, that of the cross, the most convincing test. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter" is a sentence which at once would bring up before the mind of the Jew the sacrificial worship in which he had often taken part. In the language of St. Paul, Christ "became sin for us"—a Sin Offering—"who knew no sin." In the language of St. Peter, we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish." II. THE EXAMPLE. 1. One of the purposes for which Christ came was to be an Example. The truth is sometimes obscured by dwelling too exclusively upon the mystery of redemption; as, on the other hand, there have not been wanting those who have been too much absorbed in that view of

our Lord as the True Light which meets the cravings of the human intellect. To keep the proportion of faith is not always easy, especially as personal needs and experiences are apt to exaggerate some one aspect of a mystery. 2. Christ's life throughout has this twofold view—sacrificial and exemplary. We might have expected that the latter view would be associated chiefly with His public ministry, and the former with His Passion. But it is not so. Both culminate on the cross. "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example" (1 Pet. ii. 21); and, as the context shows, the final sufferings are before the apostle's gaze. A suffering world needs a suffering Example. The Passion brought out to view the virtues which man is ever requiring to exercise, and in a manner which exercises a spell upon all who look upon "that sight." Even those who are blind to the atoning efficacy of the mystery are touched by its moral loveliness. 3. "Brought as a lamb to the slaughter;" "dumb before her shearers." This is a difficult virtue which the words unveil—patience, or meekness. What we read in the prophecy we see in the Passion (Matt. xxvii. 12, 14; John xix. 9) and upon the cross. "All three hours His silence cried." "When He was reviled, He reviled not again." The lamb, innocent and silent, aptly represents the Lamb of God, meek and patient in the midst of His slaughterers. III. LESSONS. 1. Let us seek through the sufferings of Christ to realize the enormity and malice of sin. Pardon without any revelation of Divine justice and holiness might have demoralized mankind. We know not "how that satisfaction operated towards God," and the Church has not attempted to define this. That Christ died "for us men and for our salvation" is all that we are required to believe, and that is the kernel of the doctrine. 2. Seek to imitate the patience of Jesus—to be silent when "reviled," and to still within the movements of anger and pride. 3. To be able to do this we must meditate upon Christ's sufferings, and see in all things, as they reach us, the will of God, though our sufferings may arise from the faults and sins of others. We must "commit our cause to Him that judgeth righteously," accepting calmly all that we may have to bear. 4. We must pray for the help of the Holy Ghost, without which we cannot grow in patience and meekness, which are "fruits" of the Spirit. (*The Thinker.*)

And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb.—*The sheep before the shearers:*—I. OUR SAVIOUR'S PATIENCE. Our Lord was brought to the shearers that He might be shorn of His comfort, and of His honour, shorn even of His good name, and shorn at last of life itself; but when under the shearers He was as silent as a sheep. How patient He was before Pilate, and Herod, and Caiaphas, and on the cross. 1. Our Lord was dumb and opened not His mouth against His adversaries, and did not accuse one of them of cruelty or injustice. 2. As He did not utter a word against His adversaries, so He did not say a word against any one of us. Zipporah said to Moses, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me," as she saw her child bleeding; and surely Jesus might have said to His Church, "Thou art a costly spouse to Me, to bring Me all this shame and bloodshedding." But He giveth liberally, He openeth the very fountain of His heart, and upbraideth not. 3. There was not a word against His Father, nor a syllable of repining at the severity of the chastisement laid upon Him for our sakes. You and I have murmured when under a comparatively light grief, thinking ourselves hardly done by. But not so the Saviour. Many are the Lamentations of Jeremiah, but few are the lamentations of Jesus. Jesus wept, and Jesus sweat great drops of blood, but He never murmured nor felt rebellion in His heart. I see in this our Lord's complete submission. There was complete self-conquest too. There was complete absorption in His work. II. VIEW OUR OWN CASE UNDER THE SAME METAPHOR AS THAT WHICH IS USED IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD. As He is so are we also in this world. Just as a sheep is taken by the shearer, and its wool is cut off, so doth the Lord take His people and shear them, taking away all their earthly comforts, and leaving them bare. 1. A sheep rewards its owner for all his care and trouble by being shorn. Some of God's people can give to Christ a tribute of gratitude by active service, and they should do so gladly every day of their lives; but many others cannot do much in active service, and about the only reward they can give to their Lord is to render up their fleece by suffering when He calls upon them to suffer, submissively yielding to be shorn of their personal comfort when the time comes for patient endurance. The husband, or perhaps the wife, is removed, little children are taken away, property is shorn off, and health is gone. Sometimes the shears cut off the man's good name; slander follows; comforts vanish. Well, it may be that you are not able to glorify God to any very large extent except by undergoing this process. 2. The sheep is itself benefited by the operation of shearing. Before they begin to shear the sheep the

wool is long and old, and every bush and briar tears off a bit of the wool, until the sheep looks ragged and forlorn. If the wool were left, when the heat of summer came the sheep would not be able to bear itself. So when the Lord shears us, we do not like the operation any more than the sheep do; but first, it is for His glory; and secondly, it is for our benefit, and therefore we are bound most willingly to submit. There are many things which we should like to have kept which, if we had kept them, would not have proved blessings but curses. A stale blessing is a curse. 3. Before sheep are shorn they are always washed. If the Good Shepherd is going to clip your wool, ask Him to wash it before He takes it off; ask to be cleansed in spirit, soul and body. 4. After the washing, when the sheep has been dried, it actually loses what was its comfort. You also will have to part with your comforts. The next time you receive a fresh blessing call it a loan. A loan, they say, should go laughing home, and so should we rejoice when the Lord takes back that which He had lent us. 5. The shearers take care not to hurt the sheep: they clip as close as they can, but they do not cut the skin. When they do make a gash, it is because the sheep does not lie still: but a careful shearer has bloodless shears. The Lord may clip wonderfully close: I have known Him clip some so close that they did not seem to have a bit of wool left, for they were stripped entirely. 6. The shearers always shear at a suitable time. It would be a very wicked, cruel, and unwise thing to begin sheep-shearing in winter time. Have you ever noticed that whenever the Lord afflicts us He selects the best possible time? 7. It is with us as with the sheep, there is new wool coming. Whenever the Lord takes away our earthly comforts with one hand, one, two, three, He restores with the other hand, six, a score, a hundred; we are crying and whining about the little loss, and yet it is necessary in order that we may be able to receive the great gain. If the Lord takes away the manna, as He did from His people Israel, it is because they have the old corn of the land of Canaan to live upon. If the water of the rock did not follow the tribes any longer, it was because they drank of the Jordan, and of the brooks. III. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO IMITATE THE EXAMPLE OF OUR BLESSED LORD WHEN OUR TURN COMES TO BE SHORN. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Eastern sheep-shearing:*—Those who have seen the noise and roughness of many of our washings and shearings will hardly believe the testimony of that ancient writer Philo-Judæus when he affirms that the sheep came voluntarily to be shorn. He says: "Woolly rams laden with thick fleeces put themselves into the shepherd's hands to have their wool shorn, being thus accustomed to pay their yearly tribute to man, their king by nature. The sheep stands in a silent inclining posture, unconstrained under the hand of the shearer. These things may appear strange to those who do not know the docility of the sheep, but they are true." (*Ibid.*) *Lying still under the Divine hand:*—I went to see a friend, the other day, who has had a great number of sore afflictions, yet I found her singularly cheerful and content; and when I was speaking with her about the matter, she said, "I have for years enjoyed perfect submission to the Divine will, and it was through what I heard you say." So I asked her, "What did I say?" She replied, "Why, you told us that you had seen a sheep that was in the hands of the shearers, and that, although all the wool was clipped off its back, the shears never cut into its flesh; and you said that the reason was because the sheep was lying perfectly still. You said, 'Lie still, and the shears will not cut you; but if you kick and struggle, you will not only be shorn, for God has resolved to do that, but you will be wounded into the bargain.'" (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **He was taken from prison and from judgment.**—"*He was taken from prison and from judgment:*"—Every word here is ambiguous. The principal interpretations are as follows—1. "Without hindrance and without right He was taken away," *i. e.* He was put to death without opposition from any quarter, and in defiance of justice. 2. "Through oppression and through judgment He was taken away" (so virtually R.V.). "Judgment" here means judicial procedure, and the rendering "oppression" is guaranteed by Ps. cvii. 39. 3. "From oppression and from judgment He was taken away," *i. e.* released by death, or taken by God to Himself (2 Kings ii. 10). Of the three interpretations, the last seems the most natural. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Christ's imprisonment* (with John xviii. 12, 13):—The word "prison" should not, perhaps, be taken to designate a particular place of incarceration; for there is no evidence to show that Christ was ever confined in any such penal cell. He was, however, a prisoner. His limbs were bound, and He was held in the custody of the iron-hearted officers of the Roman government. We shall look upon Christ's imprisonment in three aspects. I. AS THE MOST THRILLING

CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF CHRIST. 1. He was first taken a prisoner from Gethsemane. 2. He was then taken as a prisoner from Annas to Caiaphas (John xviii. 19–24; Matt. xxvi. 59–68). 3. He was next taken a prisoner from the palace of Caiaphas to the hall of the Sanhedrim. 4. He was next taken as a prisoner from the hall of the Sanhedrim to Pilate (John xviii. 28–38; Luke xxiii. 1–7; Mark xv. 1–5; Matt. xxvii. 11–14). 5. He was then taken as a prisoner from Pilate to Herod (Luke xxiii. 8–12). 6. He was then taken as a prisoner back from Herod to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 13–25; Matt. xxvii. 15–26; Mark xv. 6–15). 7. He was finally taken as a prisoner from Pilate to Calvary (Matt. xxvii. 27–50). The cross is the culmination of the whole. II. AS THE GREATEST ENORMITY IN THE ANNALS OF CRIME. 1. His imprisonment combined all the chief elements of crime. (1) Here was the foulest injustice. Imprisonment is for criminals; but had Christ ever been guilty of a crime? (2) Here too is the basest ingratitude. Was there one in Judea, or Galilee, or Samaria, who could refer to one single act of unkindness which He had ever committed towards any? Not one. "He went about doing good." (3) Here is astounding impiety. This Prisoner was the "Son of God," the "Prince of Life." 2. His imprisonment was effected in the name of law and religion. (1) The law they referred to (Deut. xviii. 20) had no just application to the case of Christ, and they must have been conscious of its irrelevancy. Christ was not a "prophet" who had presumed to speak a word in "the name of Jehovah" which "He had not commanded;" nor had He spoken in the name of "any other god;" and therefore by this old law of Moses He was not guilty of death. But what if a law authorize a morally criminal act, is the act less criminal? In no measure. (2) But it was in the name of religion as well as law. This makes the crime greater still. The men that instigated the crucifixion of the Son of God were professedly religious men; they were the religious authorities of the country. Under profession of respect for truth and God, they wrought all the enormities which blackened the page of evangelic history. III. AS THE MOST WONDERFUL ENIGMA IN THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. I know of nothing more wonderful in the universe than the sight of Jesus in bonds. 1. Why does Eternal Justice allow unsullied holiness thus to suffer? 2. Why does Almighty God give men the power to perpetrate such enormities? 3. Why does All-powerful Emanuel Himself submit to these enormities? Does not the vicarious principle stand out in sunny prominence? (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ's ignominious death and glorious resurrection:*—I. THE SCANDAL ITSELF, laid down in the most aggravating terms—"prison," "judgment," "cutting off from the land of the living," and a "stroke upon Him for transgression;" as if the prophet had said, Grant all that you will charge upon Him, prison, judgment, strokes, cutting off—express it the worst way you can, all this will not impeach the glory of His excellency. II. THE DEFENCE in other terms. "He was taken" from those things, and "who shall declare His generation?" If you think it is not enough to say that He died for others, and that He was stricken for the transgression of My people, yet He did not as every man that dieth for others; He perished not in this expression of His love, as others do: He was taken from prison, and from judgment, and now liveth gloriously. There are two things in the defence—1. His resurrection. "He was taken from prison and from judgment;" He got out from under it. 2. His life and duration in that state. "Who shall declare His generation?" The sense is, who shall declare His age or duration? who can tell those endless ages that Christ shall live? (*T. Manton, D.D.*) **Who shall declare His generation?**—"*Who shall declare His generation?*"—The Hebrew word for "generation" is translated "age" in Isa. xxxviii. 12, but it more properly means "lifetime." The Septuagint translators have, however, hit the true idea of this passage in making the Greek word γενεάν, instead of βίον or αἰῶνα, for the thought regards the apparent brevity of Messiah's career. 'He comes, and He goes, and there is an end of Him. Who will take the trouble to think about a life that is cut off so soon, and leaves, apparently, no trace? He has no successor, no family, no descendants to preserve His name." The Septuagint reading, therefore, while not a literal translation of the Hebrew, follows its thought. The Hebrew literally is, "Who shall think upon His career?" The Septuagint is, "Who shall describe or recount His race or generation?" The one refers directly to His lifetime, but indirectly to His posterity; the other confines itself to the posterity. Now, both questions are answered in verse 10: "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days." The Messiah will have a spiritual seed on the earth, and in them He will continue His own earthly life. (*Howard Crosby, LL.D.*) "*Who shall declare His generation?*"—Meyer, Alford, and others understand this as equivalent to, "Who can describe the wickedness of the men of

this time?" Hengstenberg interprets it, "Who shall declare His posterity?" *i. e.* His spiritual children, born of the travail of His soul. Delitzsch translates, "Of His contemporaries, who considered this: 'He was snatched out of the land of the living, seeing that, on account of the transgression of My people, vengeance fell on Him?'" "*Who shall declare His generation?*" A difficult clause. The Hebrew word for "generation" (*dôr*) may mean—(1) The time in which He lived. (2) The circle of His contemporaries. (3) Those like-minded with Him (Ps. xii. 7; xiv. 5; Prov. xxx. 11, etc.); but is never used with any such significance as "length of life," or "life-history," or "posterity." We may take it in the sense (2), and render with R.V. "and as for His generation who (among them) considered," etc. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) **For the transgression of My people was He stricken.**—*Christ "smitten unto death:"* —There is reason to believe that the original text has, in this instance, undergone some alteration, and that it anciently stood thus, "*He was smitten unto death.*" It was thus written by Origen, who assures us that a certain Jew, with whom he disputed, seemed to feel himself more pressed by this expression than by any other part of the chapter. It is thus rendered by the Septuagint in our present copies; and if, in this instance, it had not concurred with the original, neither could Origen have urged it with good faith, nor the Jew have felt himself embarrassed by the argument which is suggested. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The Person stricken:*—The Jews pretend that no single person is designed in this portion of prophecy; but that the people of Israel collectively are denoted under the figure of one man, and that the purport of the chapter is a delineation of the calamities and sufferings which that nation should undergo, with a view to its correction and amendment. The absurdity of this evasion will be obvious to him who considers that the person who is represented as "stricken" is carefully distinguished by the prophet from the people for whose benefit He suffered. "For the transgression of My people was He stricken:" in addition to which, He is affirmed to be stricken "even to death," which, as Origen very properly urged, agrees well with the fate of an individual, but not with that of a people. (*Ibid.*) *The substitution of the innocent for the guilty:*—Let us consider what circumstances met in this case, and must be supposed to concur on any occasion of this kind, to render fit and proper the substitution of an innocent person in the place of the guilty; and what is peculiar in the character of our Saviour, which renders it worthy of God to set Him apart as "*a propitiation for the sins of the world,*" and annex the blessings of eternal life to such as believe in the doctrine of the Cross, and repent, and turn to God. I. It is obvious that such a procedure as we are now contemplating, in order to give it validity and effect, MUST BE SANCTIONED BY THE SUPREME AUTHORITY. For a private person, whatever might be his station in society, to pretend to introduce such a commutation of punishment as is implied in such a transaction, would be a presumptuous invasion of legislative rights, which no well-regulated society would tolerate. This condition was most unequivocally satisfied in the mystery of Christ's substitution. II. Another indispensable circumstance in such a proceeding, is, that IT SHOULD BE PERFECTLY VOLUNTARY ON THE PART OF THE SUFFERER. Otherwise, it would be an act of the highest injustice; it would be the addition of one offence to another, and give a greater shock to all rightly-disposed minds than the acquittal of the guilty without any atonement. Here there appears, at first sight, an insuperable difficulty in the way of human salvation. How could that be rendered which was, at once, due to sin and mankind at large? Where could one be found that would endure the penalty freely, which was incurred by a sinful world? This our Saviour did. No sacrifice should go unwillingly to the altar. It was, indeed, reckoned a bad omen when any one did so. None ever went so willingly as He. III. It is farther necessary that the substitute not only undertake voluntarily, but that HE BE PERFECTLY FREE FROM THE OFFENCE WHICH RENDERS PUNISHMENT NECESSARY. Accordingly, in the case of man Divine justice cannot be willing to acquiesce in a substitute who is a sharer in guilt; for the law has a previous hold upon him; there is a debt due on his own account. But Jesus Christ, though a man, was, by reason of His miraculous conception, free from the taint of original sin. IV. There would be a great propriety in this also, that THE INNOCENT PERSON SUBSTITUTED FOR THE GUILTY, SHOULD STAND IN SOME RELATION TO HIM. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was related to mankind; one like them whom He came to redeem. This was shadowed forth in the law of a Redeemer of a lost estate. The person who was to redeem must be related: hence a redeemer and a relation were expressed by one term, and the nearest relation was to redeem. Hence, then, the incarnation of our Lord was necessary. V. If the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty is at all

permitted, it seems requisite that NO ADVANTAGE SHOULD BE TAKEN OF A MOMENTARY ENTHUSIASM, a sudden impulse of heroic feeling, which might prompt a generous mind to make a sacrifice, of which, on cool deliberation, he repented. In the case we are now contemplating, nothing could reconcile the mind to such a procedure but such a settled purpose on the part of the substitute as precludes the possibility of a vacillation or change. But this condition is found in the highest perfection on the part of the blessed Redeemer. His oblation of Himself was not the execution of a sudden purpose, the fruit of a momentary movement of pity; it was the result of deliberate counsel, the accomplishment of an ancient purpose, formed in the remotest recesses of a past eternity. VI. In the case of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, it seems highly requisite that HE WHO OFFERS HIMSELF AS THE SUBSTITUTE SHOULD JUSTIFY THE LAW BY WHICH HE SUFFERS. In the substitution of the Redeemer of mankind were conjoined the most prompt and voluntary endurance of the penalty, with the most avowed and cordial approbation of the justice of its sanctions. It was a great part of the business of His life to assert and vindicate by His doctrine that law which He magnified and made illustrious by His passion. Never had the law such an expounder as in the person of Him who came into the world to exhaust its penalties, and endure its curse. VII. That the voluntary substitution of an innocent person, in the stead of the guilty, may be capable of answering the ends of justice, nothing seems more necessary than that THE SUBSTITUTE SHOULD BE OF EQUAL CONSIDERATION, AT LEAST, TO THE PARTY IN WHOSE BEHALF HE INTERPOSES. The interests sacrificed by the suffering party should not be of less cost and value than those which are secured by such a procedure. But the aggregate value of those interests must be supposed to be in some proportion to the rank and dignity of the party to which they belong. As a sacrifice to justice, the life of a peasant must, on this principle, be deemed a most inadequate substitute for that of a personage of the highest order. We should consider the requisitions of justice eluded, rather than satisfied, by such a commutation. It is on this ground that St. Paul declares it to be "impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins." In this view the redemption of the human race seemed to be hopeless; for where could an adequate substitute be found? The mystery hid from ages and generations, the mystery of Christ crucified, dispels the obscurity, and presents, in the person of the Redeemer, all the qualifications which human conception can embody as contributing to the perfect character of a substitute. VIII. However much we might be convinced of the competence of vicarious suffering to accomplish the ends of justice, and whatever the benefits we may derive from it, A BENEVOLENT MIND COULD NEVER BE RECONCILED TO THE SIGHT OF VIRTUE OF THE HIGHEST ORDER FINALLY OPPRESSED AND CONSUMED BY ITS OWN ENERGIES; and the more intense the admiration excited, the more eager would be the desire of same compensatory arrangement, some expedient by which an ample retribution might be assigned to such heroic sacrifices. If the suffering of the substitute involved his destruction, what satisfaction could a generous and feeling mind derive from impunity procured at such a cost? While we rejoice in the cross of Christ as the source of pardon, our satisfaction is heightened by beholding it succeeded by the crown. IX. If the principle of substitution be at all admitted in the operations of criminal law, it is too obvious to require proof that IT SHOULD BE INTRODUCED VERY SPARINGLY, only on very rare occasions, and never be allowed to subside into a settled course. It requires some great crisis to justify its introduction, some extraordinary combination of difficulties, obstructing the natural course of justice; it requires, that while the letter of the law is dispensed with, its spirit be fully adhered to; so that, instead of tending to weaken the motives to obedience, it shall present a salutary monition, a moral and edifying spectacle. The substitution of Christ in the room of a guilty race receives all the advantage as an impressive spectacle which it is possible to derive from this circumstance. It stands amidst the lapse of ages, and the waste of worlds, a single and solitary monument. X. Whenever the expedient of vicarious suffering is adopted, A PUBLICATION OF THE DESIGN OF THAT TRANSACTION BECOMES AS INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY AS OF THE TRANSACTION ITSELF; since none of the effects which it is intended to produce can be realized but in proportion as that is understood. Hence we see the infinite importance, in the doctrine of the Cross, that not merely the fact of our Lord's death and sufferings should be announced, but that their object and purpose, as a great moral expedient, should be published to all nations. The doctrine of remission of sins, through the blood of that Victim which was once offered for the sins of the world, forms the grand peculiarity of the Gospel, and was the principal theme of the apostolic ministry, and is

still pre-eminently "*the power of God to salvation.*" (*Ibid.*) *The crucifixion:*—I. THE SUFFERING ITSELF. "He was stricken." The greatness of this suffering will be made out to us upon these three accounts. 1. Of the latitude and extent of it. 2. Of the intenseness and sharpness of it. 3. Of the person inflicting it. II. THE NATURE OF THE SUFFERING, which was penal, and expiatory, "He was stricken for transgression." III. THE GROUND AND CAUSE OF THIS SUFFERING, which was God's propriety in, and relation to, the persons for whom Christ was stricken, implied in this word, "My people." Conclusion: Christianity is a suffering religion, and there are two sorts of suffering to which it will certainly expose every genuine professor of it. 1. A suffering from himself; even that grand suffering of self-denial and mortification, the sharpest and most indispensable of all others, in which every Christian is not only to be the sufferer, but himself also the executioner. "He who is Christ's," says the apostle, "has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." 2. From the world. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The stricken Christ:*—I. WHO WAS STRICKEN? II. REFER TO HIS SUFFERINGS. How was He stricken? 1. With reproach. "As for this fellow, we know not whence He is." 2. With ingratitude. His very "disciples forsook Him, and fled." 3. With poverty. 4. Chiefly by the rod of His heavenly Father. III. THE OBJECT OF THESE SUFFERINGS. "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." 1. Justice is satisfied. 2. Conscience is at peace. IV. THE FRUITS OF HIS SUFFERINGS, in connection with our own feelings and experience. 1. The devil is now destroyed. However formidable an enemy, the power of his arm is foiled. 2. The soul is saved. 3. All possible consolation is secured. (*J. Parsons.*)

Ver. 9. **And He made His grave with the wicked.**—"*With the rich in His death:*"—"Rich" must mean "wicked," just as "poor" often means godly. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *The suffering Servant given a convict's grave:*—Having conceived Him to have been lawfully put to death, they consistently gave Him a convict's grave; "they made His grave with the wicked, and He was with the felon in His death," though He was an innocent man—"He had done no harm; neither was guile in His mouth." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) "*With the rich in His death:*"—The meaning is, "His grave was assigned to Him with criminals, and with a rich man after He had actually died a painful death," *i. e.* He was to have been laid where the bodies of dead criminals lie, but He came after His death to lie in a grave that had been intended for the corpse of a rich man. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *A prophecy of Messiah:*—I. SOMETHING FORETOLD CONCERNING THE MESSIAH, that is, that He shall make His grave, etc. II. A REASON SUBJOINED, taken from His innocency. (*J. Durham.*) *Christ laid in the grave:*—In all the Evangelists it is clear that after death He was laid in the grave, and very particular notice is taken of it. Take here some reasons of this necessity. 1. That the unstainedness and purity of Divine justice may appear, and that, therefore, the perfection of His satisfaction may be confirmed. 2. It is much for the manifestation of the great love of God, and of the rich condescending grace of the Mediator, who is not only content to die, but to be laid in the grave, and to suffer death to have a kind of dominion over Him for a time. 3. It is for the consolation of the believer and serves mightily to strengthen him against the fear of death and the grave. He may lie down quietly in the grave, because it was Christ's bed, warmed, to say so, by Him. 4. It serves to confirm the truth of the resurrection of Christ. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.**—"*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him:*"—The Lord's hand was supreme in the business—1. In respect of His appointing Christ's sufferings. It was concluded in the counsel of God that He should suffer. 2. In respect of the ordering and overruling of His sufferings. He, who governs all the counsels, thoughts and actions of men, did, in a special manner, govern and overrule the sufferings of the Mediator; though wicked men were following their own design, and were stirred and acted by the devil, who is said to have put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ—yet God had the ordering of all who should betray Him, what death He should die, how He should be pierced, and yet not a bone of Him be broken. 3. In respect of His having had a hand actively in them (John xix. 11; Matt. xxvii. 46; Rom. viii. 32; Zech. xiii. 7). (*J. Durham.*) *The good pleasure of God in redemption:*—The good pleasure of God. Which the prophet marks to show—1. That all the good that comes by Christ to sinners is bred in the Lord's own bosom. 2. The concurrence of all the Persons of the Trinity in promoting the work of the redemption of sinners. (*Ibid.*) *The*

Divine complacency in the sorrows of Christ:—There are many expressions in Scripture, which, without explanation, are repugnant to human instincts of justice, and shocking to our intuitions of love. This is a case in point. He had done nothing overtly or morally to deserve severity, "yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It revolts our first feeling of equity and compassion; and when the statement is applied to Him of whom we are taught that God is love, we shrink at the sternness of the words. Had it been said the Lord found it necessary to put Him to grief, it would have been mysterious enough, and we should have found ourselves asking "Why?" and catechizing our speculative ideals of Divine equity and of moral necessity. But to read that it pleased the Lord to inflict this bruise and to impose this grief is a riddle which seems as harsh as it is contradictory. (*A. Mursell.*) *The unity of the Father and the Son in atonement:*—All this confusion and injustice arises from sustaining too literally in our minds the figure of duality which excludes the Father from participation in the sacrifice, and the Son from the acquiescent willinghood of its executive. It is not the punishment of an innocent Son by an angry Father that we have to consider, but rather the co-operation of the entire Godhead in the tragedy of sorrow out of which the redemption of mortality was born. Under the figure of Father and Son, the Deity devoted the full strength and tenderness of the Divine character and resource to the salvation of our race. And, in this respect, there was, and ever will be, a Divine complacency in the sorrow and suffering from which that redemption sprang. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's complacency in the Divine sorrows:*—Our topic is the Divine complacency in the sorrows of Christ. It will bear transposition; and we can speak of Christ's complacency in the Divine sorrows. Here is a blending of pleasure and pain, of joy and sorrow, as full of mystery as of love, but the key to whose mystery is carried in the bosom of its love. The sorrows of Christ were endured in pursuance of the settled and ancient purpose of God. Not of the purpose of a Father to afflict His Son, but of the purpose of the Divine Creator to redeem His universe. There was a compact of pity and of power in the heart and arm of God as soon as man had lapsed, that his lapse should be atoned and his fall restored. The Creator was not to be baffled in His plan. His life was bound up in that of His Maker; and because He lived man must live also. Not only because He loved us, but because He would not be defeated, did the mind of Deity set itself to untie the knot which the serpent had encoiled around the creature of God's image. (*Ibid.*) *Divine love and Divine suffering:*—1. The sorrows which atonement involved became a source of complacency to the Divine mind, inasmuch as the Lord foresaw their certain issues. 2. Nor could this complacency in sorrow fail to be augmented by the thought of the universal interest those sorrows would awaken. Earth, for whose sake they were endured, was the last to show that interest. 3. This complacency was made complete because the sorrows it confronted removed the barrier from the exercise of infinite beneficence and love. What is more tantalizing to a soul aflame than love restrained? (*Ibid.*) *The bruising of the Son of God the pleasure of His Father:*—I. WHOM DID JEHOVAH BRUISE? II. HOW DID HE BRUISE HIM? III. WHY DID HE TAKE PLEASURE IN BRUISING HIM? 1. That He might execute His pleasant decrees. 2. That He might fulfil His pleasant promises. 3. That He might redeem the chosen objects of His love. 4. That He might promote His Son to the highest honours. 5. That He might exalt His own glory to the uttermost. (*W. Taylor.*) *The bruising of Jesus:*—The Father was "pleased" to bruise Emmanuel. I. BECAUSE OF THE HOLY SUFFERER'S PERFECT SYMPATHY WITH HIS PURPOSE, as being the vindication of the Divine holiness, "the magnifying of the Divine law," and the upholding of the Divine government. II. BECAUSE UNDER THIS "BRUISING" JESUS WAS MANIFESTING THE DIVINE LOVE AND SYMPATHY FOR AND WITH US—perfect as it was God's, and yet true brotherly, as it was man's. III. BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DESIRED TO SEE IN US. (*J. Wylie, D.D.*) *God's purpose in the awful tragedy of the Cross:*—It is so utter a perversion of justice, so signal a triumph of wrong over right, so final a disappearance into oblivion of the fairest life that ever lived, that men might be tempted to say, God has forsaken His own. On the contrary, God's own will and pleasure have been in this tragedy. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." The line as it thus stands in our English Version has a grim, repulsive sound. But the Hebrew word has no necessary meaning of pleasure or enjoyment. All it says is, God so willed it. His purpose was in this tragedy. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Christ's sufferings; their cause, nature and fruits:*—The prophet is still dealing with the Jews' scandals. Whilst you look only to the outward meanness and sufferings of Christ, you overlook the design of God in Him.

I. THE WILL OF GOD. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him," etc., that is the cause of His sufferings. II. THE NATURE OF HIS SUFFERINGS. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." III. THE FRUITS OF HIS SUFFERING. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Christ's sufferings Divinely ordained:*—All the sufferings of Jesus Christ were laid on Him by the ordination and appointment of God the Father. This appears by Scripture, which asserts—1. The choice of Christ's person, and the designation and deputation of Him to the office of Mediator (Isa. xlii. 1; John vi. 27; Rom. iii. 25; 1 Pet. 1. 20). 2. The bestowing the person of Christ upon us, so that He was made ours (John iii. 16). 3. The determining of all the sufferings of Christ; not a sorrow, but God had it in His thoughts before all worlds (Acts ii. 23; Luke xxii. 22; Acts iv. 27, 28). 4. There are some expressions which seem to imply as if there were more than a bare knowledge and permission in this great affair, as if there were some kind of action in Christ's sufferings. It will be worthy the inquiring, then, what acts of God, what efficiency there was from Him towards the sufferings of Christ? (1) Thus far God concurred, by a withdrawing of His presence and the sight of His favour. (2) By sustaining the wicked instruments in their natures, beings, and actings, whilst they were drawing out their spite and violence against Christ (Acts xvii. 28; John xix. 11). (3) By serving His love and glory by their wickedness, that bruised and afflicted Christ. The reasons of this point are—1. Because all things fall under His decrees and the care of His providence, and therefore certainly this matter of Christ does. 2. Because this was the special design and contrivance of Heaven to bring forth Christ into the world; all other dispensations looked this way. (*Ibid.*) *God's eternal pleasure revealed in Christ:*—The plot of the Gospel was long since drawn in heaven, and lay hid in God's breast, till He was pleased to copy out His eternal thoughts, and give the world a draught of them. (*Ibid.*) *God working His own counsel through human agency:*—How is the creature to blame, then, for smiting and bruising of Christ? Or if to blame, how is God clear? 1. For the creatures' blame. They are faulty—(1) Because God's secret thoughts and intents are not their rule. Hidden things belong to God; and it is He that worketh according to the counsel of His own will. (2) They had other ends, though God turned it for good. "With wicked hands ye have taken, and crucified, and slain." (3) God's decrees did not compel them to evil; it implieth things will be, though it doth not affect them. 2. For the justifying of God when He judgeth. His justice cannot be impeached, because He infuseth no evil, enforceth to no evil, only ordaineth what shall be. His goodness cannot be impeached for suffering things which He can turn to such advantage for His own glory and the creature's good. God's decrees are immanent in Himself, working nothing that is evil in the creatures. (*Ibid.*) **When Thou shalt make His Soul an offering for sin.**—*Christ an offering for sin:*—1. It is here supposed that there is sin on the person, and that wrath due for sin is to be removed. 2. That there is an inability in the person to remove the sin, and yet a necessity to have it removed, or else he must suffer. 3. The intervening, or coming of something in the place of that person who is guilty of sin, and liable to wrath. 4. The acceptance of that which interveneth by God, the party offended, and so a covenant whereby the Lord hath condescended to accept that offering. (*J. Durham.*) *Christ a guilt-offering* (R.V., marg.):—Heb. *āshām* (Lev. v. 14; vi. 7), to be carefully distinguished from the sin-offering (Heb. *chattāh*, Lev. iv. 1; v. 13). Sin is viewed as a sacrilege, an invasion of God's honour: the *āshām* is the satisfaction paid for it, viz. the innocent life of the Righteous Servant. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The guilt-offering:*—There is a historical passage which, though the term "guilt-offering" is not used in it, admirably illustrates the idea. A famine in David's time was revealed to be due to the murder of certain Gibeonites by the house of Saul. David asked the Gibeonites what reparation he could make. They said it was not a matter of damages. But both parties felt that before the law of God could be satisfied and the land relieved of its curse, some atonement, some guilt-offering, must be made to the Divine law. It was a wild kind of satisfaction that was paid. Seven men of Saul's house were hung up before the Lord in Gibeon. But the instinct, though satisfied in so murderous a fashion, was a true and a grand instinct—the conscience of a law above all human laws and rights, to which homage must be paid before the sinner could come into true relations with God, or the Divine curse be lifted off. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The Monarch's self-surrender, a trespass-offering and a sin-offering:*—What this suffering meant, the prophet indicates in several phrases which we will link together. "His soul shall make a guilt-offering" (ver. 10). "He shall bear their iniquities" (ver. 11). "He bare the

sin of many" (ver. 12). These three expressions are derived from the Mosaic ritual; the first, from the trespass-offering, the second, from the law concerning the scapegoat, the third from the sin-offering. Inasmuch, however, as the sending away of the scapegoat was a part of the ceremonial connected with the sin-offering on the great day of atonement, we may let the second and third expressions blend into one. And then we get the thought that this suffering Servant would at once fill up the varied meanings of the sin-offering and of the guilt-offering. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *In Messiah's offering, the meanings of the trespass-offerings and the sin-offerings were all included:*—1. That there was a distinction between the significance of the trespass-offerings and that of the sin-offerings is seen in the fact that each kind of offerings had its own specific ritual and set of laws (Lev. xi. 25; vii. 1). But it is not so easy to point out wherein that distinction lay. They had some points in common. Both recognized sin in some form or other. Though every sin might not be a trespass, yet every trespass was a sin, hence (at least in one case) the trespass was to be atoned for by a sin-offering (Lev. v. 6). Both of them were for sins of omission and for sins of commission. Both were for inadvertent and for known sins. Both were for sins against conscience and against God. Both were for some sins against property. Both were for open and for secret sins. So that it is not surprising that the two frequently seem to overlap. Still a careful study will help us to draw out some distinctions between them—(1) The sin-offering recognized sinfulness as uncleanness common to the race; the trespass-offering recognized sin in the specific acts of any person among them (cf. Lev. v. 17 with Lev. xvi. 15, 16). (2) The sin-offering regarded all sin; the trespass-offering only some sins (Lev. xvi. 34; v. 1, 14, 15). (3) The sin-offering was for all the people, recognizing their oneness; the trespass-offering was for distinctive cases, recognizing their individuality (Lev. xvi. 21; v. 1, 14, 17). (4) The sin-offering conveyed the idea of propitiation; the trespass-offering embodied that of satisfaction, as, over and above its recognition of injury done towards God or man, there were specific injunctions concerning restitution, intimating a certain value as the standard required (Lev. xvi. 21, 22; v. 18; Num. v. 5–8). (5) The sin-offering had its aspect God-ward; the trespass-offering rather looked man-ward (Lev. iv. 4–6; xiv. 14). (6) The ritual of the sin-offering symbolized pardon, "covering," the "bearing away" of sin; that of the trespass-offering symbolized purification or cleansing from sin (cf. Lev. xvi. 16, 17; xiv. 14). (7) The treatment of the sin-offering indicated far deeper reproach than the treatment of the trespass-offering (Lev. iv. 11, 12; vii. 6). As the sin that poisons all is far more serious than the transgressions which mark each one, so, on the day of expiation, "the victim, because it was (symbolically) laden with the uncleanness and guilt of the whole people, and was consequently unclean, must be taken outside the camp and there burned" (Delitzsch). (8) The attitude of the sinner in the sin-offering was that of believingly recognizing the sacrifice as his substitute God-ward; but in the case of the trespass-offering he must also be ready with his compensations man-ward (Lev. xvi. 20–22; v. 16; vi. 1–7). (9) In the sin-offering the priest is always the representative of the offerer; in the trespass-offering he is generally the representative of God. "Thus the trespass-offering was a restitution or compensation made to God, in being paid to the priest, a payment or penance which made amends for the wrong done—a *satisfactio* in a disciplinary sense." 2. The prophet in the chapter before us declares that the trespass-offering and the sin-offering will be fulfilled in this Servant of God; that His work for man, towards God in reference to sin, will take into account all the aspects of sin, will honour all the claims of God, and will meet all the need of man. And so, in fact, we find it when we come to examine the representations of the work of our Lord Jesus, as given us in the New Testament. (1) Our Saviour as the sin-offering, "suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 11, 12). (2) He atones for sin, and for sins (Heb. ix. 26; Gal. i. 4). (3) He "bears away" a world's sin, yet "gave Himself for our sins" (John i. 29; Gal. i. 4). (4) The sins of all are laid on Him, and yet the individual can say, "He gave Himself for me" (1 John ii. 2; Gal. ii. 20). (5) He is the propitiation, and yet the ransom-price (1 John iv. 10; Matt. xx. 28). (6) His sacrifice avails towards God, yet is effective towards man (Heb. ix. 12–24; x. 10). (7) By His work our guilt is pardoned, our sin covered; through it our natures are cleansed (Rom. iv. 7, 8; 1 Peter i. 2). (8) As He is our propitiation, there is a reconciliation to be accepted; as He is our ransom-price, our acceptance of Him is attended with repentance towards God, and restitution towards man (Rom. v. 8–11; Acts xxvi. 20; Matt. v. 23, 24; Luke xix. 7–10). (9) As our mediating High Priest, He is our representative before God. He pleads His blood before the throne; yet is He also the voice of God

to us, through whom our pardon is proclaimed (Heb. vi. 20; vii. 25; Matt. ix. 6). Thus all the ground is covered by the one great Sacrifice, and nothing is left undone! 3. Let us learn, then—(1) The unity there is between the law and the Gospel. We have this prophecy standing seven hundred years *after* the giving of the one, seven hundred years *before* the announcement of the other: yet we find the very phrases of the prophet are adopted from the Mosaic ritual, pointing to its fulfilment in the Messiah; while the New Testament teachings as to the work of Christ are based on both ritual and prophecy, carrying them both on to their fulness of meaning, and revealing their wealth of glory. (2) We may well look on with profound reverence as the Most High brings out, in ritual, prophecy, and Gospel, that truth which men are most ready to let slip—viz. the exceeding sinfulness of sin! (3) In Gospel, prophecy, and ritual, there is, in order to meet the world's need, not only a central Figure, but a central fact. In the ritual, the priest and the offering. In the prophecy, the Messiah and His offering. In the Gospel, the Christ and His offering. Here is a threefold cord, "not easily broken." (4) Never let us forget the double aspect of the work of Christ—large enough to cover all the ground; minute enough to point out me and to save me! (5) We are not saved in sin but from it. (6) Let us not fail to catch the keynote of the law and of the Gospel, viz. that nothing is right with a sinful man till relations between him and God are right. (*Ibid.*) *Expiation:*—Both Jews and Gentiles knew pretty well what an offering for sin meant. The Gentiles had been in the habit of offering sacrifices. The Jews, however, had by far the clearer idea of it. I. SIN DESERVES AND DEMANDS PUNISHMENT. II. THE PROVISION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A SUBSTITUTE FOR SINNERS IS AN ACT OF GRACE. III. JESUS IS THE MOST FITTING PERSON TO BE A SUBSTITUTE, AND HIS WORK IS THE MOST FITTING WORK TO BE A SATISFACTION. IV. CHRIST'S WORK, AND THE EFFECTS OF THAT WORK ARE NOW COMPLETE. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's death and the law of God:*—By His death the Servant did homage to the law of God. By dying to it He made men feel that the supreme end of man was to own that law and be in a right relation to it, and that the supreme service was to help others to a right relation. As it is said a little farther down, "My Servant, righteous Himself, wins righteousness for many, and makes their iniquities His load." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The guilt-offering:*—It is strange but true, that the saddest, darkest day that ever broke upon our world is destined to cure the sadness and dissipate the darkness for evermore. It is to the passion of the Redeemer that loving hearts turn in their saddest, darkest, most sin-conscious hours to find solace, light, and help. As though to obviate the possibility of mistaking its meaning, we are reminded again, and yet again, that the death of the Divine Servant was no ordinary episode; but distinguished from all other deaths, from all martyrdoms and sacrifices, in its unique and lonely grandeur—the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the whole world. The prophet's thought will become apparent, if we notice—I. THE COMMON LOT OF MAN. It may be summed up in three words—suffering, sin, death. II. THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THIS CHAPTER. The Divine Servant presents a notable exception to the lot of man; not in His sufferings, for He was "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" nor in His death, for He died many deaths in one (ver. 9, R.V., marg.); but in His perfect innocence and goodness. "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." The Divine Servant has passed through every painful experience; has drunk to its dregs every cup; has studied deeply every black-lettered volume in the library of pain. In His case, at least, man's hastily-formed conclusions are falsified. Generally we pass from singular suffering to discover its cause in some hidden or remote transgression. In the case of Jesus Christ, however, this explanation of His unique sufferings was altogether at fault. Another explanation must, therefore, be forthcoming to account for the sufferings of the innocent Saviour. The explanation lay hid as a secret concealed in a hieroglyph, in the vast system of Levitical sacrifice, which foreshadowed the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." So, under the Divine guidance, men were led from the conclusions of ver. 4 to those of ver. 5. These conclusions expressed here as the verdict of the human conscience, after scanning the facts in the light of history, are confirmed and clenched by the unanimous voice of the New Testament. This is the great exception which has cast a new light on the mystery of pain and sorrow. It may be that there is other suffering, which, in a lower sense and in a smaller measure, is also redemptive, fulfilling Divine purposes in the lives of others; though no sufferer is free from sin as Christ was, and none has ever been able to expiate sin as He. III. THE PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THESE TRUTHS. "Thou must make his soul a guilt-offering" (R.V., marg.). This term,

"guilt-offering," occurs in the Book of Leviticus. If a man committed a trespass in the holy things of the Lord, he was directed to select and bring from his flock a ram without blemish. This was his "guilt-offering"—the word used here. He was to make a money restitution for his offence; but the atonement was made through the ram (Lev. v. 1–16). Similarly, if a man sinned against his neighbour, either in oppressing him or withholding his dues, or neglecting to restore property which had been entrusted to him, he was not only to make restitution, but to bring his guilt-offering to the Lord—a ram without blemish out of the flock—and the priest made an atonement before the Lord, and he was forgiven concerning whatsoever he had done to be made guilty thereby (Lev. vi. 1–7). Is there one of us who has not committed a trespass and sinned in the holy things of the Lord? Is there one of us who has not failed in his obligations to neighbour and friend? How certainly we need to present the guilt-offering! There is no mention made of the necessity of summoning priestly aid. This is the more remarkable, when we consider the strict Levitical system in which Israel was cradled. It would seem that in the great crisis of its need, the soul of man reverts to an earlier cult, and goes back beyond the elaborate system of the temple to the practice of the patriarchal tent, where each man acted as his own priest, and offered the guilt-offering with his own hand. No third person is needed in thy transactions with God. Jesus is Priest as well as Sacrifice. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The atonement and its results:*—I. THE THING DONE. "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." This sentence, written by the finger of God on the page of Scripture, is also written as a received truth on every page of the history of heathenism. However we may recoil from the fearful superstitions of Paganism, and weep over that sad ignorance which can suppose God delighted even with human sacrifice, never let it be forgotten that in the bloodiest rites of idolatry there are the vestiges of a truth which is the very sum and substance of Christianity. We can turn our gaze to the evidence of what is called natural religion, accompanied, it may be, and loaded with what is abominable; and there we find monuments in every age that God, at some time or another, hath broken the silences of eternity, and spoken to His apostate creatures, and taught them that unless there could be found a sufficient sin-offering, the sinful must bear for ever the burden of His displeasure. Thus from the first God gave notices of the plan of redemption, and gradually prepared the way for that oblation which could alone take away sin. In the deep recesses of Christ's undefiled spirit was paid down the debt which man owed to God. II. ITS CONSEQUENCES. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) He shall see His seed.—*Notable effects following Christ's sufferings:*—1. "He shall see His seed." Men by the suffering of death are incapacitated to increase their offspring, but this is a quickening suffering and death that hath a numerous offspring. 2. "He shall prolong His days," which seems to be another paradox; for men's days are shortened by their sufferings and death; but though He be dead and buried yet He shall rise again and ascend, and sit down at the right hand of the Father and live for ever, to make intercession for His people. 3. A third effect, which is the upshot of all, is, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." God hath designed Him for a work—the great work of redemption—even the bringing of many sons to glory. He shall pull many captives from the devil, and set many prisoners free; He shall, by His sufferings, overcome the devil, death and the grave, and all enemies; shall gather the sons of God together from the four corners of the earth. (*J. Durham.*) *Christ seeing His seed:*—1. A relation implied betwixt Christ and believers. They are "His seed," such as in the next verse are said to be "justified" by Him. 2. A prophecy of the event that should follow Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus should not only have a seed, but a numerous seed. 3. Considering the words as a promise they hold out this—that though our Lord Jesus suffer and die He shall not only have a seed, but shall "see His seed." He shall outlive His sufferings and death and shall be delighted in seeing them who shall get the good of His sufferings. (*Ibid.*) *Believers Christ's seed:*—1. They have their being of Him. 2. In respect of the likeness that is betwixt Him and them. 3. In respect of the care that He hath of them. 4. In respect of the portion which they get from Him. 5. Because of the manner of their coming to the possession of that, which through Him they have a claim to. They have a claim to nothing, but by being heirs to and with Him. (*Ibid.*) *Christ seeing His seed:*—In "shall see His seed and have long life," the figure of a patriarch blessed with longevity and numerous descendants (Gen. l. 22, etc.) is in the prophet's thoughts. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The Atonement indicates the dignity of man.* Men do not launch lifeboats to pick up corks, and we may rest assured that in the atonement there is a

just proportion between means and ends. (*James Duckworth.*) *Messiah contemplating His spiritual offspring:*—I. HE SHALL SEE THEM ALL BORN AND BROUGHT IN. II. HE SHALL SEE THEM ALL EDUCATED AND BROUGHT UP. III. HE SHALL SEE THEM ALL SUPPORTED AND BROUGHT THROUGH. IV. HE SHALL SEE THEM ALL PERFECTED AND BROUGHT HOME. (*R. Muter, D.D.*) *Christ's spiritual offspring:*—I. MESSIAH'S GLORY IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH THE HAPPINESS OF HIS OFFSPRING. II. THE APPLICATION IS NOT LESS CERTAIN THAN THE PURCHASE OF REDEMPTION. III. A SEASONABLE AND POWERFUL ANTIDOTE AGAINST UNDUE DEPRESSION OR ALARM ABOUT THE LOW STATE OF RELIGION IN THE CHURCH. IV. IT IS OUR DUTY AND HONOUR TO CONCUR IN CARRYING THIS SCRIPTURE INTO EFFECT. (*Ibid.*) *Seeing His seed* (with John xvii. 2, and Eph. v. 25–27):—"His Seed." This clearly implies that the Messiah should be the living Head of a new spiritual race. As Adam was the head of the human family, and Abraham the head of the Hebrew people, so the Lord Jesus was to be the head of a spiritual seed. The Psalmist in the second Psalm, plainly a Messianic one, declares: "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." Our Lord Jesus Himself spoke of those who would be saved by Him as given to Him by the Father. And apostles speak of the Church as composed of men gathered to the Lord, and belonging to Him. Precisely this thought is expanded in Ephesians v. 25–27. I. CHRIST'S SURRENDER OF HIMSELF WAS THE EXPRESSION OF HIS LOVE. II. A LIVING CHURCH, THE CREATION OF HIS LOVE. Just as the sculptor, before he begins to chip the marble into shape, sees with his mind's eye the figure which is first conceived by his genius and then fashioned by his skill—so with our Divine Redeemer. He from eternity, before man was created, beheld him coming into being, placed on His own footing, falling, redeemed, saved. And, as the result of His atoning work, there rises up, through His Spirit, the fulfilment of His own ideal, a new creation, a living Church, distinguished by the marks of forgiveness, justification, renewal and eternal life. III. CLEANSING THE CHURCH, THE CONTINUOUS ACTION OF HIS LOVE. "That He might sanctify and cleanse it." Then He does not love the Church because it is clean, but He first loves it that He may make it clean. IV. PERFECTING THE CHURCH, THE FAR-OFF VISION OF HIS LOVE. "A glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." V. PRESENTING THE CHURCH TO HIMSELF, THE REALIZATION OF THE IDEAL OF HIS LOVE. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The posterity of Christ:*—Jesus is still alive, for to see anything is the act of a living person. Do not be afraid that Christ's work will break down because He is dead. He lives to carry it on. I. THE DEATH OF CHRIST HAS PRODUCED A POSTERITY. We do not read that the Lord Jesus has followers. That would be true; but the text prefers to say He has a seed. 1. All who truly follow Christ and are saved by Him have His life in them. 2. Believers in Christ are said to be His seed because they are like Him. 3. They prosecute the same ends, and expect to receive the same reward. We are towards Christ His seed, and thus heirs to all that He has—heirs to His business on earth, heirs to His estate in heaven. They speak of the seed royal. What shall I say of the seed of Christ? You may be a poor person, but you are of the imperial house. You are ignorant and unlettered, it may be, and your name will never shine on the roll of science, but He who is the Divine Wisdom owns you as one of His seed. It may be that you are sick; by and by you will die. But you are of His seed, who died, and rose, and is gone into glory. You are of the seed of Him, "who only hath immortality." It follows if we are thus of a seed, that we ought to be united, and love each other more and more. Christian people, you ought to have a clannish feeling! II. THAT POSTERITY OF HIS REMAINS. If it had been possible to destroy the Church of God on earth, it would have been destroyed long ago. 1. Only read the story of the persecutions under Nero, etc. As to our own country, read the story of persecutions here. 2. There have been laborious attempts to destroy the Church of Christ by error. 3. Worldliness has gone a long way to destroy the Church of God. III. THIS POSTERITY IS ALWAYS UNDER THE IMMEDIATE EYE OF CHRIST. "He shall see His seed." He sees them when they are first born anew. Wherever His seed may wander, He still sees them. This look of Christ is one of intense delight. He will see all His seed to the last. What a seed He will have to see in the morning. It will be a part of His heaven for Him to look upon His redeemed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **He shall prolong His days** (with Heb. vii. 15, 16, 25).—*The enduring life of Christ after His sufferings:*—In these passages we have given to us, first in Hebrew prophecy, and then in Christian teaching, the doctrine of the enduring life of the Christ after His sufferings are over. The Old Testament prophet sees from afar the

new life of the Messiah, in a blaze of glory. The New Testament prophet declares the life already begun, and indicates the purposes for which that life is being spent as well as the glory with which it is crowned. The words quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews are a goal rather than a starting-point. They teach the following truths—1. Jesus Christ is now exalted: He is a Priest upon His throne. 2. In Him there is the power of an indissoluble life. 3. Because of an indissoluble life, there is an intransmissible priesthood. 4. This life and this priesthood are in action for the purpose of saving. 5. Since the life is indissoluble, and the priesthood intransmissible, there is an infinitude of saving power. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) **The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.**—*The "pleasure of Jehovah"* is the Servant's religious mission (chap. xlii. 1, 4, 6; xlix. 6, 8). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The success of Christ in His work:*—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD, the work which is here said to prosper? 1. What is the work to which the declaration refers? The term "pleasure of the Lord," as here used, must be considered as expressive of His gracious design to save a number of the human race from sin and all its fatal consequences; to render them perfect in holiness; and put them in full possession of happiness in the heavenly state. It includes in it, therefore, what has been termed the work of grace in the soul while here, and the full fruition of glory hereafter. In this work there are two things to be considered—(1) The purchase of redemption. (2) Its application. 2. Why is this work called "the pleasure of the Lord"? (1) It is the free and sovereign purpose of His will. (2) It is a purpose in the accomplishment of which He takes great delight. II. WHAT PART HAS THE REDEEMER IN THIS WORK? The management of it is wholly committed to His care. It is "in His hand." 1. Reconciling sinners unto God is a principal part of the work of salvation committed to the care of the Redeemer. 2. It belongs to the Redeemer, as their Saviour, to preserve His people from every thing that is evil in death. 3. The Redeemer has it in charge to perfect the salvation of His people, by putting them in full possession of glory, honour and immortality, in the heavenly state. III. WHAT ASSURANCE WE HAVE, THAT THIS WORK SHALL PROSPER IN THE HAND OF THE REDEEMER, so as to be fully and finally accomplished. The language of the text. What is here asserted is supported by many other passages of the Word of God. Consider—1. The character of Him to whom the work is entrusted. 2. The merit of His obedience, and the perfection of His atonement. 3. The progress He has already made in the work. (*G. Campbell.*) *The salvation of sinners the pleasure of God:*—This will appear if we glance at the means which He has graciously provided for its accomplishment. I. HE HAS GIVEN HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON. II. HE HAS GIVEN US HIS WORD. III. HE HAS ESTABLISHED A GOSPEL MINISTRY. The salvation of sinners is the pleasure of the Lord, and this shall prosper in the hands of Christ. 1. Omnipotence has promised it, as the reward of His obedience and death. 2. He is gone to carry it on before the throne of God. 3. He will descend to complete it when He shall come to judge the world in righteousness. Have we entrusted our souls into His hands? (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Human redemption a pleasure to the Almighty:*—I. HUMAN REDEMPTION IS A PLEASURE TO THE ALMIGHTY. It is not a mere work of intellect, it is a work of the heart. It is "His good pleasure." It is the highest qualification of His benevolence. It is benevolence restoring the rebellious to order, the sinful to holiness, the miserable to blessedness. What is most pleasing to a being always—1. Engages most of his thoughts. 2. Enlists most of his energies. II. HUMAN REDEMPTION IS ENTRUSTED TO CHRIST. It shall "prosper in His hands." He has undertaken the work. Four things are necessary to qualify a being to succeed in any undertaking. 1. He should enter on it from a deep sympathy with it. We persevere most in the work we most love. 2. He should foresee all the difficulties that are destined to occur. When difficulties arise which we never anticipated, we often get baffled and disheartened. 3. He should have power equal to all the emergencies of the case. 4. He should have sufficient time for its accomplishment. Death often prevents us from finishing our work. Christ has all these qualifications. III. HUMAN REDEMPTION IS DESTINED TO SUCCEED. It "shall prosper." An argument for the certainty of its accomplishment. 1. Therefore do not be perplexed by the dispensations of Providence. The result of all the outcome of the chaos will be glorious. 2. Therefore do not be discouraged in your Christian labours. (*Homilist.*) *The Divine purpose fulfilled:*—I. GOD HAS FORMED A PURPOSE OF MERCY TOWARD MANKIND. This is intended by the expression "the pleasure of the Lord." Notwithstanding the state to which mankind had been reduced by sin, a state in which God, with justice, might have abandoned them to hopeless punishment, that God has adopted

towards them a far different mode of procedure. In these mysterious depths of eternity there was a Divine determination that a way of recovery should be opened for the guilty. This is styled "the eternal purpose of grace," "the good pleasure which the Father had purposed in Himself," "the good pleasure of His will," "the good pleasure of His goodness." The manifestation of this pleasure of the Lord began on earth as soon as the need of mercy existed. The new economy, established at an ever-memorable era, has explained what might be ambiguous, has illuminated what might be dark, has supplied what might be deficient under preceding dispensations, and it lays open before us in substance the whole counsel of the Eternal. We now discern that the entire fabric of creation, and the entire system of Providence, are subordinated to the stupendous achievements of redemption, those achievements the attributes of the Divine nature being united in harmony to conduct and to perform. II. THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PURPOSE OF MERCY IS COMMITTED TO THE LORD JESUS. "The pleasure of the Lord is in His hand," the hand of the Messiah, the Son of God, committed to Him to be by Him accomplished. That the Lord Jesus does sustain this momentous trust is obvious from the entire testimony of revelation. The Lord Jesus performs the purpose of His mercy, we observe more particularly, by His own atonement for sin, and by the communication of the Holy Spirit. III. UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD JESUS, THE PURPOSE OF MERCY SHALL BE PERFECTLY AND TRIUMPHANTLY ACCOMPLISHED. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." 1. The certainty of the accomplishment must appear from the mere existence of a Divine purpose to that effect. The supreme majesty of the perfections of God itself secures the fulfilment of whatever He has designed. 2. The certainty rests upon the inherent excellency of His own character and work. The proper deity of the Lord Jesus Christ renders failure in His work impossible. 3. We observe the Divine assurances solemnly pledged to that effect. Besides general declarations to which we might easily appeal there are recorded assurances addressed by the Father to the Son in His mediatorial capacity respecting the exaltation He was to receive as a specific recompense of the shame and suffering which on behalf of men He had endured. (*J. Parsons.*)

Ver. 11. **He shall see of the travail of His soul.**—*Christ's soul-travail and its outcome:*—1. The word translated "travail" has not the special force which the English reader might infer from it; it is a word of much more general use, of much less intensity and much greater variety in the notion of sorrow which it conveys. It is used some sixty times in the Old Testament and means trouble of any kind, as in the following passages: "Man is born to *trouble*, as the sparks fly upward." "God made me forget all my *toil*." "If by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength *labour* and sorrow." In all these cases the same word is used as in the text. It denotes strong effort, attended with pain and grief. 2. Again, the clause is usually supposed to mean that the glorious results which would follow, would be so glorious, that when beheld, the Messiah should look on them and be satisfied. This is *a* truth; but it is one developed by necessary inference from the text. The clearer and more exact rendering would be, "He shall look out from his sorrow, and be satisfied:" not only satisfied with the results of the sorrow, as if amply rewarded by them; but satisfied in the sufferings, in the fact of having undertaken them, because of the grand reason which was ever present to His view. Even in the midst of the sorrow He could look out above and beyond it. Thus we see in this text a most helpful and gladdening light on those aspects of the atoning work which are set forth in this chapter: we are taught not only that Christ would be satisfied when the outcome of His work was complete, but that He was satisfied with his errand on earth while in the very depths of His sorrow and care. At the same time, this view of the text does not exclude the more usual one. So far from that it intensifies it. For if there was satisfaction even at the very hour of the suffering, much greater must be the joy when the suffering is past and the glory secured. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The aspect of the Redeemer's work which afforded Him satisfaction:*—I. There must have been a sublime satisfaction in KNOWING THAT THE SUFFERING WAS ON BEHALF OF OTHERS; and that, however unworthy they might be of such entire devotion, they would through it be relieved of a burden which would have crushed them. II. There must have been a satisfaction in ASSERTING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE OF THE SUPREME GOVERNOR. In the work of the Lord Jesus Christ "righteousness and peace kissed each other." III. The Messiah would experience an intense satisfaction at THE PROSPECT OF THE NEW NAME WHICH HE WOULD ACQUIRE, EVEN THAT OF "SAVIOUR." IV. THE MESSIAH

BEHELD FROM AFAR MEN WHO ONCE WERE REBELS, STANDING BY HIS SIDE, AS SONS AND HEIRS OF GOD: and this satisfied Him. V. OUR SAVIOUR FORESAW THE CLOSE UNION BETWEEN THE SAVED AND HIMSELF, and was satisfied. He knew that after He had died for them, He should live in them, and that there would be such an outgoing of life from Him to them, as to form out of the human race men of finer mould and of higher character than, apart from Himself, would ever have been possible. VI. The Messiah was satisfied in BEHOLDING FROM AFAR THE RELATION OF SAVED MEN TO EACH OTHER. He saw the Church "perfect in One," its discords hushed, its sounds all attuned to perfect harmony. He beheld the believers sharing His glory, all with Him, seated with Him on His throne. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's sufferings fruitful:*—I. THE ASPECT IN WHICH THAT WORK IS HERE REPRESENTED BY WHICH OUR SAVIOUR ACCOMPLISHED HIS GREAT UNDERTAKING. The sufferings of Christ were—1. Expiatory and piacular. 2. Voluntary. 3. Most intense and awful. "The travail of His soul." He had a spirit unequalled for sensibility and affection, and keenness of feeling. To form a just conception of His sorrow, we must unite the ideas of compassion for the grief of the distressed, and horror at what was cruel and unjust; of indignation at the oppressor, and pity for the oppressed; of a wish to deliver the guilty, and an abhorrence of their sin. We must connect all the iniquity which He witnessed, and all the knowledge He had of the human heart. We must think of all the wickedness, the hardness of heart, the unbelief of man. We know nothing of the nature of this sacrifice; but this we know, that it was an act of amazing energy, of strenuous labour. It was not submission merely; it was a direct and positive consecration of His whole being; as if He would place Himself on the altar, and become Himself the sacrificing Priest. II. THE SUBLIME AND HEAVENLY SATISFACTION ARISING TO THE REDEEMER IN CONTEMPLATING THE EFFECT OF HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. It is the pleasure arising from the expectation of success. 2. It is the pleasure of the most pure and exalted benevolence. 3. It is such satisfaction as springs from the great importance and difficulty of the event brought to an accomplishment. 4. It is satisfaction arising from the peculiar relation of His character and work, to the event itself, and all its consequences. III. THE CERTAINTY THAT THIS SALVATION SHALL BE FINALLY REALIZED. 1. The sufferings of Christ are assumed as the basis of this assurance, and lead us to observe the natural and inherent attraction of this doctrine. But this certainty arises—2. From the tendency of the Gospel to an unlimited and ceaseless diffusion. 3. From its conferring, wherever it is embraced, the greatest temporal advantages in connection with its spiritual benefits. 4. From its amazing progress. 5. From the promises of final success, and the encouraging appearances in the circumstances of the Church in the present day. (*R. S. McAll, M.A.*) *The connection between Messiah's sufferings and subsequent triumphs:*—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST FORMED A PART OF THE PREDETERMINATION OF GOD, IN REFERENCE TO THE SALVATION OF MAN. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," etc. 1. Contemplate the character of that purpose, in reference to its objects as manifesting the benevolence of God. 2. The wisdom of God. 3. The holiness of God. II. THE INDISSOLUBLE CONNECTION THAT SUBSISTS BETWEEN THOSE SUFFERINGS AND THE REDEEMER'S SUBSEQUENT TRIUMPHS. 1. The character of the triumphs of Christianity on earth. 2. The certainty of those triumphs. 3. Their extent. (*J. W. Etheridge.*) *The travail of Christ's soul:*—I. WHEREIN THIS SOUL-SUFFERING DID NOT CONSIST. 1. We are not to suppose any actual separation betwixt His Godhead and His manhood. 2. There was no sinful fretting, no impatience, nor carnal anxiety in our Lord. 3. There was not in him any distrust of God's love, nor any unbelief of His approbation before God, neither the least diffidence as to the result. 4. Neither are we to conceive that there was any inward confusion, challenge or gnawing of conscience in Him, such as is in desperate sinners, cast under the wrath of God, because there was no inward cause of it, nor anything that could breed it. II. WHEREIN IT DID CONSIST. 1. It consisted in the Godhead's suspending its comfortable influence for a time from the human nature. Though our Lord had no culpable anxiety, yet He had a sinless fear, considering Him as man. The infinite God was angry, and executing angrily the sentence of the law against Him. 2. He had an inexpressible sense of grief, not only from the outward afflictions that He was under, but also from the current of the wrath flowing in on His soul. 3. It consisted in a sort of wonderful horror which the marching up of so many mighty squadrons of the highly provoked wrath of God, making so furious an assault on His innocent human nature, was necessarily attended with. (*J. Durham.*) *Christ's soul-travail:*—I. CHRIST'S TRAVAIL OF

SOUL IN THE WORK OF OUR REDEMPTION. II. THE CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS. "He shall see." III. HIS CONTENTMENT THEREIN. "He shall be satisfied." He counts the salvation of lost sinners to be satisfaction enough for all His pains. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Christ's soul-sufferings*:—In Christ's soul-sufferings we may take notice of two things—His desertion and agonies. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's satisfaction in the salvation of sinners*:—Jesus Christ taketh an infinite satisfaction in the salvation of sinners. I. EVIDENCES OF IT. 1. Christ pleased and entertained Himself in the thought of it before the world was (Prov. viii. 31). 2. This was the end and aim of His coming into the world; and it is pleasant when a man hath attained his end, especially if it be greatly desired and much laboured for. For delight is according to the degree of the desire and labour. 3. Now, in heaven it is His rejoicing to see the work thrive. 4. When He shall come from heaven to judge the world, with what triumph and rejoicing will He come, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father! II. THE REASONS OF IT. His love was the cause of all—His love to the Father, and His love to the saints. (*Ibid.*) *The satisfaction of the Messiah*:—Satisfied! Very few can say that word on this side of heaven. There is no satisfaction for those who are self-centred; and we say reverently that God Himself could not have known perfect blessedness unless He had been able to pour Himself forth in blessing upon others. We might put the truth into four sentences. There is no satisfaction apart from love. There cannot be love for sinning suffering souls without travail. There cannot be travail without compensating joy. In proportion to the travail, with its pangs and bitterness, will be the resulting blessedness. I. THE TRAVAIL OF CHRIST'S SOUL. He suffered because of His quick sympathy with the anguish that sin had brought to man. He probably saw, as we cannot, the timid oppressed by the strong; the helpless victim pursued by rapacity and passion. He heard the wail of the world's sorrow, in which cries of little children, the shriek or moan of womanhood, and the deep bass of strong men wrestling with the encircling serpent-folds, mingle in one terrible medley. He sighed over the deaf and dumb, had compassion on the leper, wept at the grave. As the thorn-brake to bare feet, so must this world have been to His compassionate heart. He must also have suffered keenly by the rejection of those whom He would have gathered, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but they would not. But these elements of pain are not to be compared with that more awful sorrow which He experienced as the substitute and sacrifice of human guilt. It could not be otherwise. He could not have loved us perfectly without becoming one with us in the dark heritage of our first parent. Dost thou love Christ? The first duty He will lay on thee will be love to others. And if thou dost truly love, thou too shalt find thy meed of soul-travail. II. THE CERTAINTY OF INFINITE COMPENSATION. "He shall see." It is impossible to suffer voluntarily for others, and not in some way benefit them. Thy pain may sometimes seem abortive—the mighty throes that rend thee for the souls of others appear in vain; but it is not really so. Drop by drop thy tears shall presently turn the scale. Patience shall have her perfect work. The laws of the harvest in this sphere are as certain in their operation as in that of nature. III. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S COMPENSATION. It will come—1. In the glory that shall accrue to the Father. 2. In the redemption of untold myriads. Great as the harvest of sin has been, we believe that the saved shall vastly outnumber the lost. Nothing less will satisfy Christ. Remember that in the first age, before mention is made of the latter triumphs of the Gospel, John beheld in heaven a multitude which no man could number. 3. In the character of the redeemed. He shall present them to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. 4. In the destruction of the devil's work. What is involved in the majestic promise that He should destroy the works of the devil, is not yet made manifest. In due time we shall see it all. IV. THE GREATNESS OF THOSE RESULTS. 1. They must be proportionate to the glory of His nature. It is not difficult to satisfy, at least temporarily, a little child. But as its nature develops, it becomes increasingly hard to content it. But surely there is more difference between the capacity of an angel and that of a man, than between the capacities of a man and a babe. But, great as an angel is, his capacity is limited and finite. What then must be the measure of that blessedness, of that harvest of souls, of that result of His travail, which can content the Divine Redeemer? 2. They must be proportionate to the intensity of His suffering. The results of God's work are always commensurate to the force He puts forth. You cannot imagine the Divine Being going to an immense expenditure without a sure prescience that He would be recouped. Satisfied! We shall hear His sigh of deep

content, and see the triumph on His face. And if Christ is satisfied, we shall be. On this let us rest. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Messiah suffering and Messiah satisfied:*—I. A few thoughts illustrative of THE MEANING of the text. II. Two or three PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS to show how we ought to be affected who believe that meaning. 1. The "satisfaction" of Messiah in relation to the present world is yet incomplete. This should promote humility. 2. In spite of all past disappointments, we confidently expect the fulfilment of this prophecy. 3. The subject ought to lead us individually seriously to examine whether we are contributing to the Saviour's satisfaction, either by what we are or by what we are doing. (*T. Binney, D.D.*) *The reward of the Redeemer's sufferings:*—He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. 1. In the free remission of sins which, through His blood and in His name, has been proclaimed to the children of men. 2. In the actual return of sinners to God. (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) *Christ's travail and satisfaction:*—The travail is the agony of one Divine as well as human, and that word leads us to the deepest depths of Gethsemane and Calvary—deeper than any plummets of angels' sympathetic imagination could ever sound; while, on the other hand, the satisfaction spoken of is similarly the satisfaction of one Divine as well as human, and projects before us something higher than the usual serenity of God, something more blissful than the usual gladness of the skies, some harvest home, some exquisite ecstasy that fills and overflows the Father-heart of God. I. Whatever there may be in this word, there is a lesson of this sort, that WITHOUT SACRED TRAVAIL IN THE SENSE OF LABOUR, SACRIFICE, PATIENCE, THERE IS NEVER ANY ABIDING SATISFACTION. Not even for God. There are, I doubt not, indeed, many things which yield satisfaction to God, which, perhaps, involve no Divine travail of proportionate amount. I dare say it might be the case that creation came easily to Him, to the overflowing energy of Divine omnipotence. That it was easy for His infinite wisdom to adapt every organism to its place, and every creature to its circumstances; and He has satisfaction in that work of His hands. Perhaps providence comes easily to Him. But when He aims at the greater objects that engage His heart, when He would not make but save the world, when He would get back to Him the love of His suspicious and wandering children, when He would fill His house with guests, and when He would make these guests eternally worthy of His fellowship, and capable of communion with Him, then not easily even for Him can that work be done; but between Him and this joy that He sets before Him there is the travail of Bethlehem, with its lowliness, of His lonely pilgrim path of misunderstanding, of the weakness of feeble friends, and the bitterness of hateful foes:—there is Gethsemane, there is Calvary. Do not let us dream of doing anything effective for ourselves or others cheaply, lightly, easily. "If any one will be My disciple," says Christ, "let him take up the cross—the gibbet—and follow Me"—bidding farewell to dreams of ease, thoughts of self-indulgence, and copying the pattern set upon the Mount of Calvary. There is no sorrow in the world which you and I cannot materially relieve if we will but share it, but there is no sorrow that can be touched till we share it. II. WHEREVER THERE IS SACRED TRAVAIL THERE IS ALWAYS ABIDING SATISFACTION. There may be travail in other directions without any satisfaction. Travail for wealth often leaves a man in poverty; travail for the sake of honour leaves him still insignificant and unknown. Do not spend your labour for that which will not profit, but aspire to the grand reward, to the noble results of existence, and put forth the sacred travail which, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, is rewarded and blessed of heaven. III. Our text suggests a third lesson which it is desirable for all Christian workers to remember—THE SALVATION OF MAN IS THE SATISFACTION OF GOD. IV. THE SALVATION OF MEN WILL BE ON SUCH A SCALE, AS TO GIVE COMPLETE AND PERFECT SATISFACTION TO GOD. The word "satisfaction" is a large word. You know it is easy to please a man, but it is hard to satisfy him; and, as some one has said, it is the same with God; He is easily pleased, but hard to satisfy. (*R. Glover, D.D.*) *Christ's soul-travail:*—I. THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL. Think of the travail of our Lord's soul between Bethlehem and Calvary. 1. The travail of waiting during the long years of the life at Nazareth, during the tedious process of training the disciples that followed (Luke xii. 50). 2. The travail of His own personal temptation, in the solitude of the wilderness, the protests of Peter, the impulses and the spiritual aloofness of the multitudes, and the actual hostility of their leaders (John i. 11). 3. Omitting many other particulars, the travail of Gethsemane and the cry upon the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46). 4. The travail with sin. "Upon Him was laid the iniquity of us all." A pure spirit is alway pained, even at the sight of meanness or

vice. Christ's spirit was so pure that Satan could find nothing in Him (John xiv. 30); and yet in the loneliness of the passion He suffered the penalty of sins not His own, wrestled with them in prolonged agony, triumphed over them for ever on the Cross. And if the travail of His soul be measured by the distance between His holiness and the guilt with which He consented to be charged, it will be seen to be absolutely without parallel in human history. II. THIS TRAVAIL, SO IT IS SOMETIMES STATED, HAS PROVED SHEER WASTE, or at least, has not accomplished, and is not likely to accomplish, anything like what Christ in enduring it expected. 1. "Christianity a failure" has been the theme of many a critic of our faith; and the failure has been alleged to occur in almost every department of thought and morals and mission. It must be confessed that Christianity has not yet succeeded completely anywhere. Even in places where it has had on its side almost every possible advantage—been supported by governments, illustrated by every kind of genius, in control of the influences of education and public opinion—it has not made society quite pure, or even the average character of its own agents and adherents faultless. And at present there is no part of the earth upon which the Saviour can be imagined to look and to be satisfied with what He sees. The complaint sometimes takes a more personal form. Every Christian is occasionally tempted to think that religion is proving for himself personally something of a failure. After years of sincere trust and service, there are faults of temper, elements of discontent and self-seeking and sin present in the nature, and often apparently even supreme there. And instead of imagining that our Saviour is satisfied with us, the disposition is rather to imagine that we can never satisfy Him, never become "perfect" and matured, but that we shall have to go on stumbling and faulty to the end. 2. There are two obvious modes of dealing with these complaints and suspicions. It would be possible to plead the intractability of the material, and to imitate natural science in her ceaseless demand for time. Or, we may place ourselves with this prophet at the ultimate end of our Lord's career, and see whether there are not, in society and in the heart of man, processes of progress that are tending to success. The conclusion will probably be that the success of Christianity, in relation to everything that concerns morality and religion, has already been so great as even to guarantee the eventual satisfaction concerning which this verse speaks. (1) In regard to the thoughts, which in reasoning men must underlie and to some extent determine their practice. Think what an incalculable improvement Christianity has effected in the prevalent conception of God. From these new thoughts of God the early Christians deduced their conclusions as to the infusion of a Divine element into the spirit of man, by means of which he may be lifted up to God. (2) In matters of social progress and the amelioration of the race, is Christianity a failure? The more personal suspicion, that religion is proving a failure as far as we ourselves are concerned, is a natural fear, due sometimes to the ease with which our best aspirations are forgotten, sometimes to the weight of this "body of sin." But it is impossible to imagine the Saviour, now "expecting until His enemies be made His footstool," ever turning to His Father in tones of protest, "After My travail and death, is this penitent sinner to be rejected? this man, struggling with the sin within him and about him, to be worsted?" Did He not once actually say to His Father, thereby pledging both to pardon and help us, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth?" And therefore as certain as the Cross of Christ are the pardon of every worst sinner who comes to God through Him, and the perfecting of every believer who with inflexible purpose cleaves in devotion to Him. This word "satisfied" again, in its Scriptural use, suggests as much. Almost the only place where a man is spoken of as being really satisfied with what he perceives himself to be is in one of the psalms, and even there it is an emotion that is not reached until after death: "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness." It seems to imply that, as long as a man lives, he will have some fault to find with himself, weakness or immaturity or aptitude to sin. But, clinging to his Saviour when he dies, all these miseries will fall away from him, and at last the sinner and the Saviour will be satisfied. (*Prof. R. W. Moss, D.D.*) *The effects of our Lord's passion:*—I. THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD. These sufferings were—1. Continual. 2. Extreme. 3. Voluntary. 4. Expiatory. 5. Completely effectual. II. THE SATISFACTION WHICH HE FEELS IN VIEWING THE EFFECTS OF HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. The sight. Our Lord has seen of the travail of His soul. (1) From the beginning He beheld in contemplation all the fruits of His sufferings; this was the joy which was set before Him. (2) During the various dispensations preceding His actual coming in the flesh He saw the effects of the

sacrifice which He had engaged to make. (3) But it was on the cross itself that the Lord Christ saw with one unerring view the full and splendid results of His undertaking. (4) After His ascension into heaven, however, the prospect of the salvation of men began to be realized in a more ample manner. (5) Throughout the succeeding ages of the Church the Saviour has still continued to behold the fruits of His travail. (6) But not only has our Lord already seen of the travail of His soul, He still does see of it. "His arm is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." (7) But the Saviour shall see hereafter in a still more ample measure this glorious sight. 2. The satisfaction. We are not merely to consider the salvation of sinners as satisfying the Saviour, but as satisfying Him after all the preceding anguish of His sufferings. Conclusion: 1. The light which the subject casts on the value of the soul of man. Both the inconceivable agony of our Lord's passion, and the satisfaction He derives from its effects, suppose the unspeakable worth of the human soul. 2. The light which this subject reflects on the hope of a penitent's acceptance with Christ. Surely, if He endured such a travail, such anguish of soul and body, and that for the redemption of sinners, He will never reject any one who sincerely renounces his sins and flies to Him. Surely His atonement can reach the case of the worst offender. 3. The illustration which this subject supplies of the powerful motive, by which the Christian is constrained to obey his Saviour. What can claim and fix our love and obedience, if such sufferings, voluntarily endured for us, cannot? 4. The light this subject throws on the future propagation of the Gospel throughout the world. For, if the engagement of the Covenant of redemption expressly be that our Lord "shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," then we may go forth in the cause of missions and of the Bible with a humble confidence. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *The salvation of man, the joy of the Redeemer:*—SOME OF THOSE OBJECTS WHICH IT IS DECLARED THE MESSIAH SHALL BEHOLD, AS THE RESULT OF HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. To remove obstructions out of the way of the sinner's salvation. 2. The salvation of His own people. 3. To rectify the moral disorders of our nature. II. THE SATISFACTION WITH WHICH THE SAVIOUR WILL BEHOLD THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS PURPOSES. 1. The completion of any great undertaking is accompanied with satisfaction. 2. Another source of satisfaction to the Saviour must be in the consciousness of having accomplished a work of infinite beneficence. (*S. Summers.*) *The satisfaction of Christ's sufferings:*—I. WHAT WAS THE TRAVAIL OF CHRIST? II. WHY HE SUBMITTED TO IT. III. WHY AND WHEN HE IS SATISFIED THAT HE ENDURED IT. 1. He is satisfied when He sees any penitent transgressor alarmed by His warnings, or touched by His merciful invitations, and turning to the obedience which he owes to God. 2. When He sees those whom He has redeemed walking uprightly before God. 3. The last and fullest recompense of the Redeemer's sufferings is still to come; to come in that great and joyful day, when He shall see the family which He has ransomed with His blood surrounding His throne in glory. (*J. B. Sumner, M.A.*) *The sympathy and satisfaction of the Redeemer:*—I. THE DEEP, DIVINE, IMPASSIONED SYMPATHY OF THE REDEEMER. 1. If we analyze the expression, "the travail of His soul," we shall find that its meaning is not exhausted, if, indeed, it is illustrated at all, by a reference to the physical sufferings of our Lord. In the writings of the Fathers; in the devotional literature of the Middle Ages; in much of the sacred poetry of ancient, and even of more recent, times; and more specially in the highly realistic conception of sacred and legendary art, the physical sufferings of the Redeemer are treated with an emphasis and detail, which is not authorized by the Inspired record, and which imperils the clearness of our insight into the deeper meaning and mystery of His passion. It is not denied that physical suffering, most acute, most varied in form, and far transcending all power of description or of imagination, was the Divinely appointed lot of Him whom "it pleased the Lord to bruise." Yet there is a reticence on the part of the inspired writers in relation to the physical sufferings of our Lord which is profoundly suggestive, not only as implying that a too realistic conception of the Passion is prolific of unhealthy and morbid tendencies, but as indicating that it is not within the range of His bodily anguish that we are to discover the true gauge and meaning of His "travail." 2. If we contemplate the more subjective phases of the Redeemer's suffering, we see the impossibility of appreciating, from the standpoint of our human experience and intelligence, the travail of a sinless soul, "smitten of God and afflicted." 3. But "the travail of His soul" involves more than this. It includes that profound and indescribable sympathy, that yearning pity for fallen man, that self-denying and soul-absorbing love of souls,

which led the Eternal Son of God to surrender Himself to humiliation and suffering, to empty Himself and become "obedient unto death—the death of the Cross"—that sympathy which perhaps has told more powerfully upon the human heart than the most picturesque and stirring incidents in His life of lowliness and pain. It was in respect of His sorrow for the fallen and the lost that there was "no sorrow like unto His sorrow." I linger on the study of this "travail of His soul" because of its intimate relation to the success of all truly Christian toil. With many of us the gravest problem of life is the comparative fruitlessness of our work. Does not the secret lie in the feebleness of our sympathy, in the absence of that which has been called a "passion for saving souls"? II. THE CALM AND TRANQUIL ASSURANCE WITH WHICH THE DIVINE REDEEMER SURVEYS THE COURSE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIS TOIL. A single word in the original is responsible for this deduction, which, however, is sustained not only by the highly elliptical character of the passage, but by the general tenor of the references of Holy Scripture to the mediatorial function. These passages more particularly which refer to the session of the Redeemer on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and notably the memorable passage in the Hebrews: "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool," establish the doctrine which the Hebrew original, with characteristic conciseness, enshrines in one word. The same doctrine is reflected in the history of the Christian Church, which, even in its varying cycles and its intermittent fortunes, bears witness to a Divine Headship, calm, patient, and undisturbed. This tranquil survey of the development and fruitage of His past travail in the moral history of the world does not involve the idea of the personal inactivity of the ascended Son. But this ceaseless activity is not fretted by the anxieties which wait upon human toil. Our noblest work is harassed and hampered by conscious weakness, by distrust of our methods, by the precarious conditions under which we labour, by actual failures, or by the dread of prospective defeats. We, too, are baffled by contingencies not calculable by human foresight: and in front of us there looms that inevitable end of all work which comes alike to all. It is not under such conditions that the enthroned Redeemer surveys the fields of His toil. In the calm assurance which these words imply, there lies a tacit rebuke of the recklessness and feverish impatience of the Church in regard to the conversion of the world. III. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS FINAL AND ETERNAL SATISFACTION. It is obvious that if this passage is to be taken literally, the ultimate issues of redemption will far transcend the loftiest anticipations which the Church has ventured to entertain. For though there be a few passages even in the ministry of our Lord which seem to look towards a less cheering sequel, a study of their surroundings will show that there is no collision between them and the most hopeful interpretation of the words of the text. No conclusions drawn from merely human analogies can be fairly applied in the endeavour to ascertain the limits within which the satisfaction of the Reedemer is to be understood. Human nature is governed by sentiment. Judging of the Divine administration by its own feelings, it has assumed that nothing less than the final restoration of every fallen man can satisfy the travail of the soul of the Redeemer. But the Divine economy is not an economy of sentiment. The infinite love of the Father acts only in harmony with the other attributes of the Divine nature. Law must be satisfied as well as love; and the human will must not be coerced in its acceptance or rejection of the provisions which mercy has devised. But while we decline to indulge even a larger hope, which rests only on sentiment and on the subtle perversion of the Sacred text, no limitations which must necessarily be assigned to its exposition can spoil it of its overpowering significance. No human mind can indicate the sources or measure the depths of that satisfaction. The practical application of this ancient prophecy is furnished by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 58).

(*R. N. Young, D.D.*) *Christ's vision on the Cross*:—It was in the crisis of His mental and spiritual horror, and agony and darkness, that a vision broke on the eyes of Jesus which made even His death on the Cross to be even a satisfaction to Him. I. HE SAW THE COMPLETION OF THE MOST STUPENDOUS UNDERTAKING OF GOD. II. THE VISION GAVE HIM THE SATISFACTION OF A CONQUEROR. III. IN THAT VISION WAS A SIGHT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IN WINNING THE HEARTS OF MEN TO GOD. (*C. F. Deems, LL.D.*) *He shall be satisfied*:—The satisfaction of which the prophet speaks is not the joy of a sinner in the Saviour who redeems him, but the joy of the Saviour over sinners whom He has redeemed. I. THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL. We may take note of some of the ingredients that entered into the cup, although we cannot measure the degree of their bitterness. 1. He who was

from all eternity the beloved of His Father put His glory off, and put on our nature. 2. He severed Himself from the company of the holy who loved and worshipped Him, for the company of the unholy who in feeble friendship vexed or in open enmity crucified Him. 3. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 4. He met personally with the person of the wicked one in our quarrel. 5. His heart was often sore vexed by ignorance, selfishness, unfaithfulness, even of His own selected disciples. 6. The people for whose sake He came into the world—the Israel among whom he was born and bred—would none of Him. 7. The office of the priesthood, which He loved and honoured as God's institute to hold up the promise of redemption, was by those who held it prostituted to reject the counsel of God. 8. But alone, and above all, incomprehensible to us, yet awful both for the part that we know and the part that we know not, is the desertion by the Father, and the final descent of wrath, due to sin, on the Redeemer's soul. II. THE FRUIT THAT RESULTS FROM THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL. It is not to the sufferings in themselves that the Redeemer looks. Herein appears the greatness of His love. He looks over and past the travail of His soul, and fixes His regards on the results that it secures. III. THE SATISFACTION WHICH THE SAVIOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE RESULTS OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL. How comes it that this new creature is graven more deeply on the heart of the Eternal Son than all His other works? Those other possessions were created by His word, or fashioned by His hand, but this springs from the travail of His soul. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *"The travail of His soul:"*—In dealing with the travail of our Redeemer's soul, we are like a child writing down in figures the national debt of the country. The figures are soon written, and they are all correct; but how much of the mighty meaning has entered the mind of that child. (*Ibid.*) *The fruit of Christ's sacrifice* included three things:—I. THE GLORY THAT SHOULD ACCRUE TO THE FATHER from the new splendours reflected on all the perfections of His character by the work of human redemption. II. THE REWARD THAT SHOULD ACCRUE TO THE SAVIOUR HIMSELF, His personal exaltation, mediatorial authority, His Father's approbation, and the blessings of countless millions ransomed by His blood. III. THE BENEFIT THAT SHOULD ACCRUE TO HIS PEOPLE, the blissful change produced upon their condition, character, and prospects—children of wrath snatched from hell, servants of corruption rescued from their debasing servitude, rebels against God subdued by the sweet influence of His grace, cleansed from all moral defilement, arrayed in the beauties of holiness, purified, refined, ennobled, rendered worthy associates of unfallen angels, and made to people heaven, who, but for Christ's interposition, must have been the tenants of hell. This last is the cause of His satisfaction specially referred to in the text. (*J. Roxburgh, M.A.*) *The success of the Gospel:*—How few of us are satisfied! The prophet himself seems far from being satisfied; for in the first verse of the chapter he laments, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And yet so complete shall be the Gospel at last, so entirely shall it fulfil all that God meant it to accomplish, that Jesus Himself shall be satisfied. I. WHY THIS SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IS CALLED THE TRAVAIL OF JESUS' SOUL. Because Gospel blessings are given us on account of Christ's sufferings. II. If we would see a little more clearly the final success of the Gospel, let us ask, WHEN DID HE SEE THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL, AND WAS SATISFIED? at what time? This chapter, I think, tells us when. "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," says the tenth verse, "He shall see His seed." III. If we would ask IN WHAT RESPECTS JESUS WAS SATISFIED, we may answer at once, in every respect. All the purposes for which He died will be accomplished. We may hence learn—1. That the number of those finally saved will be exceedingly great. 2. The complete final sanctification of believers. 3. Another reason for which Christ poured out His soul unto death was, to obtain for us the grace and help of His Holy Spirit. (*E. Bradley.*) *The promised fruit of Christ's sufferings:*—I. THE PREDICTION BEFORE US HAS ALREADY BEEN PARTIALLY FULFILLED. Already has our Redeemer seen much of the fruit of His sufferings. Our once barren world, watered by His tears and His blood, has already produced a large harvest of righteousness and salvation. II. DURING THE PERIOD WHICH MUST ELAPSE BEFORE TIME SHALL END, THIS PREDICTION SHALL RECEIVE A MUCH MORE AMPLE ACCOMPLISHMENT. III. IT IS TO THE FINAL CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS, IT IS TO ETERNITY, THAT WE MUST LOOK FOR THE COMPLETE FULFILMENT OF THIS ANIMATING PREDICTION. Our Redeemer will see that spiritual edifice, the foundation of which was laid in His blood, which has been so long erecting, standing before Him finished, resplendent

in glory, and perfect in beauty. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The prophecy of the Cross:*—In fancy we can see the Son of God standing before the world began upon the heights of heaven, His ancestral home, and there with conflicting emotions at work within His heart, and mirrored on His face, He sees the great drama of Calvary unrolled before His eyes. I. JESUS SAW THE NECESSITY FOR THE CROSS. 1. He knew that God the Father had plans for man. He was a being of order and intelligence. Man was to be created in the image of God. He was to have happiness within his reach. It was to come by a perfect obedience to the will of God. That was all man needed for happiness. 2. Jesus saw that men would go away from the plan of God. II. JESUS SAW THE REALITY OF THE CROSS. Jesus knew as He looked with prophetic eye that there must be some satisfaction rendered for the law that had been violated. He saw that He must render that satisfaction. III. JESUS SAW THE FRUIT OF THE CROSS. (*A. W. Bealer, D.D.*) *The Saviour's ultimate joy:*—May we not safely say that the joy will be as varied as the relationships which our Saviour bears to us? It will be the joy of the Sufferer whose agony is forgotten in the abundance of bliss,—the joy of the Sower in reaping the abundance of the harvest,—the joy of the Shepherd in seeing all the sheep as one flock, safe for ever in the heavenly fold,—the joy of the Friend in seeing all His friends by His side in a union with Him and with each other, that no misapprehension shall ever mar, and no sin shall ever stain,—it will be the joy of the Warrior when the battle is over, when every enemy is still as a stone, and the summons to fight is exchanged for victorious rest,—it will be the joy of the Leader, who has brought all His host into the promised land,—it will be the joy of the Mediator, who has discharged His trust and surrendered it to the Father, saying, "Of those whom Thou gavest Me I have lost none,"—it will be the joy of the King who is to reign for ever over a kingdom in which revolt has been made impossible through the achievements of almighty grace,—it will be the joy of the Redeemer when the redemption is complete, fulfilling His longings and His prayers,—it will be the joy of the First-born Son at seeing every member of the new-born family safe in a happy home, which no sin can disturb and no death invade,—it will be the joy of the Son of man in witnessing the ideal of human perfection,—it will be the joy of the Son of God, as to principalities and powers in heavenly places He reveals through a glorified Church the manifold wisdom of God, showing to worlds on worlds what Infinite Love devised and Infinite Power achieved! (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Travail of soul and satisfaction:*—I have known an eminent portrait-painter, who, when the crisis of his picture came at which it was to be determined whether or not he had produced a likeness of the features only, or a picture of the soul and character of his subject, used to fall into perfect paroxysms of excitement, weeping, wringing his hands and grovelling on the ground; but when it was over and the true likeness stood embodied on the canvas, gave way to equally extravagant exultation. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Messiah satisfied:*—Small things will satisfy a small mind. It requires great things to satisfy a great mind. What must be required to satisfy the mind of an angel? above all, what must be required to satisfy the mind of God? The salvation of ruined mankind does so! (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The satisfaction of realized purpose:*—There is intense joy in work when it is done and well done. The humblest mechanic feels this pleasure when he sees the article he has been making passing out of his hands perfect. The poet surely feels it when he writes Finis at the end of the work into which he has poured the full force of his genius. What must it have been to William Wilberforce to hear on his deathbed that the cause to which he had devoted the toil of a lifetime had triumphed, and to know that, when he died, there would not be a single slave breathing in any of the dependencies of Britain! (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.—*Justification by the knowledge of Christ:*—I. THE GREAT BENEFIT THAT FLOWS FROM CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. Justification. II. THE PARTIES MADE PARTAKERS OF THE BENEFIT. "Many." III. THE FOUNTAIN FROM WHICH THIS BENEFIT FLOWS TO MANY. "My righteous Servant." IV. THE WAY CHRIST JUSTIFIES. Not simply by forgiving, but by His satisfying for them. "He shall bear their iniquities." V. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS BENEFIT IS DERIVED. "By His knowledge." (*J. Durham.*) "*My righteous Servant:*"—Consider the title that Christ gets in these words. I. He is called the Lord's SERVANT. It looks to Him as Mediator. It imports—1. A humiliation and inferiority in respect of God (Phil. ii.). 2. His prerogative as being singularly and eminently God's Servant. 3. The particular task or work that is laid on Him, and the commission that He hath got to prosecute that work. 4. That our Lord Jesus, in performing the work of

redemption, cannot but be acceptable to Jehovah, because it is a performing of that with which He hath entrusted Him. II. He is called the Lord's RIGHTEOUS SERVANT. He is an excellent Servant; not righteous simply as He is God, nor as He is man, but righteous in the administration of His offices, and in the discharge of the great trust committed to Him. He administrates His offices—1. Wonderfully wisely. 2. Very tenderly. 3. Most diligently and effectually. 4. With all faithfulness. (*Ibid.*) *Justification:*—There are commonly six causes made necessary to concur in justification. 1. The efficient cause—God, the Party that doth justify. 2. The final cause—His own glory. 3. The meritorious cause—Christ's merit. 4. The inward instrumental cause—faith. 5. The formal cause, or that wherein justification consists. 6. The external, instrumental cause—the Word of God. (*Ibid.*) *Knowledge and faith:*—Faith, where it is saving, hath always knowledge going along with it. 1. Faith is nothing, but as it lays hold on some object. How can faith lay hold on an object, except it know it? 2. Faith, as justifying, is always holden forth as making use of and giving credit to that which is revealed in the Word. 3. In justification, God would have a sinner proceed as a man doth who defends himself before an earthly tribunal. As it is dangerous in a weighty cause to have an ignorant advocate, who puts in a wrong defence, so is it, in this case, to be ignorant (Rom. x. 3). 4. There must be repentance ere a sinner can be justified, which supposeth knowledge. He must needs know his sin, and that his own righteousness will not do his turn. 5. Look forward to the duties of holiness, which are necessary, though not to justify you, yet that ye may live as it becomes justified persons. Now, can any know or do duties, who are ignorant? 6. Consider your own peace, and how, in order to it, there is a necessity of knowledge. (*Ibid.*) *Justifying faith:*—1. The necessity of it. 2. The Object of it. 3. The act of it. 4. The effects that flow from it. 5. The manner of its concurring in the attainment of justification. (*Ibid.*) *Justification by the knowledge of Christ:*—1. It is the privilege of the Gospel to discover a way for the justification of sinners "by His knowledge." 2. Faith is knowledge, or an apprehension of Christ. "The knowledge of Him." 3. By faith we are justified. He saith by His knowledge, but He meaneth faith; such apprehensions of Christ as cause answerable dispositions in the spirit. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The knowledge of Christ:*—I. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE KNOWLEDGE TO WHICH THE PROPHET ASCRIBES SUCH EFFICACY? It is well to cultivate the understanding, if, perchance, the Spirit of enlightening grace might employ this faculty as an avenue to the heart. And yet we must beware of substituting the means for the end. Others have acquired a more clear view of the Gospel revelation, who know much, but employ their knowledge to no better purpose than to maintain an empty parade of religious profession. What is the knowledge to which we allude—the knowledge which involves privileges so inestimable? The prophet calls it, the knowledge of the righteous Servant of God. This is no other than the holy Jesus, the righteous Messiah. 1. There must be the knowledge of self. 2. The knowledge which the sinner acquires of his own character, though connected with that to which the prophet alludes, is not the thing itself. It is the knowledge of the Saviour, Christ. To know the Lord Jesus Christ is to renounce all virtue in ourselves, and to look to Him alone for salvation. But there is a further particular comprehended in the knowledge which the believer has of Christ. The Lord Jesus is called the "righteous Servant of God." If we love Him, we must love Him as a righteous Saviour. II. THE BENEFITS WHICH SUCH A KNOWLEDGE IS MADE INSTRUMENTAL IN PROCURING. 1. The believer enjoys justification from sin by the sufferings and death of Christ. 2. As he is united by faith with the Saviour, he partakes in His righteousness. 3. As he is designed for the heavenly inheritance, he must be made meet for its enjoyment; and therefore he has the promise of the Spirit of Christ to sanctify his heart. (*W. North, M.A.*) "*By His knowledge:*"—That is, either by His own knowledge, or by their knowledge of Him. And, as Dean Plumptre puts it, the prophet may have been directed to an expression which included both. For both are true of Christ. Men are saved by knowing Him; and, on the other hand, it is His knowledge of the Father that enables Him to lead men to the Father. (*Expository Times.*) *Justifying the many:*—1. Here is a state supposed with regard to the many—that they would need to be justified. Look at history. Let us look into our own hearts. Let us look at the pure and holy law. 2. The prophet foresees One who would be an exception to the many. While to them iniquities belong, this one would be the "righteous Servant." There has been but One in all history to whom this expression could completely and unreservedly apply. 3. Nor did the prophet foresee this One merely as one Righteous One amid a desolate waste of sin, but he

foresees Him taking on Himself the liabilities of the race. "He shall bear their iniquities." 4. The knowledge of this Righteous One should have peculiar value. "By His knowledge;" this and no more will the Hebrew term bear. But we may understand either—by the knowledge He has, or by the knowledge that He imparts, or by the knowledge of Himself that men should gain. Either way a sense is conveyed that is intelligible and true. 5. Where the Righteous One is thus known, He accomplishes a glorious justifying act. By means of the saving acquaintance with Him which believing penitents make, when, confessing their sin, they rely on Him for pardon, He, in the exercise of His own royal rights, absolves them from all their guilt, and releases them from the condemning sentence of the law of God. 6. As the result of this release the penitents are re-set in a position of favour, grace, and love. 7. The ground or reason of His justifying the many, is that He bore their iniquities. The justifying is not only a sequence, but the consequence of His bearing our sins. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.**—*Christ's conflict and conquest:*—I. CHRIST'S CONFLICT. II. CHRIST'S CONQUEST. The conflict is last in the order of the words, but first in order of nature and time. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The greatness of the Sin-bearer:*—It is the voice of God Himself; and it is befitting that, as He introduced His Servant in the opening verses of this marvellous portraiture, so, in these closing words, He should pronounce His verdict on His career. Two things are clearly predicated of the Sin-bearer. 1. That He should be great. 2. That He should attain His commanding position, not as the founder of a new school of thought, nor as the leader of a social reformation, nor as possessed of exceptional saintliness—but as a Sufferer. I. THE GREATNESS GIVEN BY THE FATHER AS THE REWARD FOR CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE TO DEATH. It was meet that such a reward should be bestowed, for the sake of those who should afterwards follow in the footsteps of their Divine Master. None could ever deserve more or better than Christ; and if He were without recognition or reward, might it not be thought that Heaven had no prize to give for faithful service? Surely He must have a reward, or the very order of the universe might be deemed at fault? But what reward should He have? What could compensate Him for having laid aside the exercise of His Divine prerogative; for having assumed our nature; for having passed through the ordeal of temptation, sorrow, and pain; for having become obedient to death, even the death of the Cross? All worlds were His by native right; all holy beings owned His sway as Creator and God; all provinces of thought, emotion, power, and might, sent Him their choicest tribute. What reward could He claim, or have? The answer may be suggested by recalling our own pleasure in conferring pleasure, our joy in giving joy. Let the limitations imposed by our mortality or circumstances be removed; let us be able to realize to the full the yearnings and promptings of our noblest hours; let the wish to help be accompanied by a sympathy that cannot hurt the most sensitive, a wisdom that cannot mistake, a power that cannot be daunted or thwarted; and probably we should at once drink deep draughts of blessedness like God's. This is the blessedness of Christ, and this is the reward which the Father has given Him. God Himself could not give, nor the Saviour ask for, a greater reward than this. And, in its magnificence, it appeals to all who would tread in His steps. This is Heaven's supreme reward: that all who pour out their souls to death shall obtain enlarged opportunities and possibilities of service. II. THE GREATNESS THAT CHRIST'S DEATH HAS SECURED HIM AMONG MEN. He is worthy to take the mysterious scroll of destiny, and break its seals, because of the light He has cast on the great mysteries by which our lot is shadowed. 1. Pain. When it enwraps us in its fiery baptism, we are apt to accuse ourselves or to doubt God. But Jesus has taught us that there is yet a third way of regarding pain. He had not sinned, yet He suffered as none of woman-born ever did. Evidently, then, pain is not always symptomatic of special sin. He was once so submerged in anguish that for a time He lost the sense of His Father's love; but He never suggested that there was failure or obliquity in the moral government of the world. The death of Jesus has therefore robbed death of these two implications, and has taught us that it is often sent, and must be borne, with the view of benefiting others. What a priceless service was this—to transform pain; to persuade sufferers that by their travail of soul they were enriching the whole world of men. 2. Death. Men dread it. But He, by His dying, has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. For this we count Him great, that through death He undid death. 3. Sin. When Jesus died on the Cross, He was numbered with

transgressors; but He stood over against all transgressors, distinct from them and bearing their sin. This surely constitutes an overmastering claim for us to count Christ great. III. THE GREATNESS WHICH HIS DEATH WILL WIN FOR CHRIST IN THE ESTIMATION OF OTHER RACES OF BEING. Not to the Mount of Beatitudes, but to the Cross, will distant worlds send their deputations in all coming ages, to learn the manifold lessons which it alone can teach. There they will learn to know the very heart of God, His hatred against sin, His love for the sinner, His fidelity to covenant engagements, His righteousness, His truth. The Cross is the heavenly prism that enables us to distinguish the constituents of the Divine nature. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **He shall divide the spoil with the strong.**—"*He shall divide the spoil with the strong:*"—This is generally interpreted as picturing a conqueror sharing with other fellow-conquerors in the booty of the conquered. But could that figure have any analogy in Christ's triumph? Who could be His fellow-conquerors? What could be the booty of His conquered ones? Much better is it to consider "the strong," or "the mighty ones," to represent the powers of darkness, who have made spoil of the human race, and the division of the spoil with them by Messiah to be the rescue of souls from their grasp. The "many" (ver. 11) whom He saves will then be the spoil He snatches from the great enemy, and we can read the whole passage: "By the knowledge of Him shall My righteous Servant give righteousness to many, and He Himself shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him the many as His portion, and he shall divide the spoil with the mighty ones." This allusion to the powers of evil gives completeness to the prophetic description. The humble birth, unattractive position in society, and unfavoured career through life, are given in vers. 2, 3. His partnership with distress and His own sufferings are exhibited in vers. 4, 5, 6. His meekness is portrayed in ver. 7. Then comes the apparent failure of His life, followed by its complete triumph in saving souls. We need a word regarding the enemy triumphed over to make the wonderful prophetic sketch complete. (*Howard Crosby, LL.D.*) *The Lord Jesus a glorious Conqueror:*—Dividing of the spoil is the effect of a sure and a great conquest. The eminency of it lieth in these four things—(1) Either in the power of the adversaries. There is no triumph in prevailing over weak things. (2) The unlikelihood of the means. A thousand men were slain by the jawbone of an ass by the hands of Samson; and a numerous host discomfited by Gideon's pitchers and three hundred lamps. Such things as these make the success memorable. (3) The manner or nature of the victory. Total defeats are most noted. (4) A conquest is glorious in the effects or result of it. If it be of great importance and consequence to the good of a people, when fears are removed, and privileges are granted and enlarged, spoilers taken, a kingdom subdued—these things make for the glory of the victory. Let us see if such things be not found in the conquest of Christ. THE ADVERSARIES. They are always expressed by such notions as do imply great strength and power (Col. ii. 15; Eph. iv. 8). 1. There is the devil, who is a powerful adversary. But "the prince of this world is judged" (John xvi. 11). 2. The law was an enemy, as it condemns us (Col. ii. 14; Eph. ii. 16). 3. Death and hell (1 Cor. xv. 54; 2 Tim. i. 10; Rev. i. 18). 4. The flesh (Rom. viii. 3). 5. The world (John xvi. 33). 6. All the adverse powers in the world (Ps. ii. 10–12). II. THE MEANS. The weapons of this warfare are not carnal. 1. As to His death. 2. By the Word of the Cross, called the foolishness of preaching. 3. By His Spirit; a great force, but secret and undiscerned. 4. By His prayers and intercessions. III. THE MANNER OR NATURE OF THE CONQUEST, how it is achieved. 1. The enemies are overcome and terribly broken: there is a total dissipation of all the powers of darkness. 2. Not barely overcome, but spoiled and rifled (Col. ii. 15). 3. Such a victory as endeth in a solemn triumph; as conquerors in public view carried their spoils and their enemies tied to their chariots, so Christ would expose them to open shame. IV. WHAT SPECIAL BENEFITS WE HAVE BY THE CONQUEST OF CHRIST. 1. The banishment of distracting fear (Heb. ii. 15). 2. An encouragement to the spiritual conflict. 3. Joy unspeakable and glorious. 4. Hopes of glory; we shall conquer with Him, and reign with Him. 5. The very exaltation of Christ is a great comfort to us. 6. Christ's conquest is a token, earnest and pledge of our victory. 7. What Christ did in this conquest, He did it for our sakes. He will have nothing but we shall share in it. 8. Another benefit is usefulness and serviceableness for all that befalls us. Christ doth so effect it that all things work together for good (Rom. viii. 28). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) **He hath poured out His soul unto death.**—*The conflict of Christ explained:*—I. HIS DEATH. "He hath poured out," etc. II. THE IGNOMINY OF IT. "He was numbered with the transgressors." III. THE CAUSE OF IT. "He

bare," etc. IV. THE NOTED CIRCUMSTANCE IN IT. "He made intercession for the transgressors." (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The love of Christ*:—He gave Himself. I. THE GIFT. "His soul." II. THE MANNER OF GIVING. "Poured out." III. THE INTENT. (*Ibid.*) *Christ killed by the inner Cross*:—It was not the Cross of wood that killed the Saviour, but the inner Cross, which lay heavily on His soul. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Christ's connection with sinners the source of His glory*:—I. The first source of the Mediator's glory is, that He, out of His love to guilty men, has POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH. The penalty of sin is death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The Lord Jesus came into such connection with men that He bore the death penalty which guilty men had incurred. Remark the expression: "He hath poured out His soul unto death." It is deliberate. It is a libation presented with thought and care; not the mere spilling of His blood, but the resolute, determinate pouring out of His whole life unto its last drop—the pouring it out unto death. Christ's resolve to die for you and me was not that of a brave soldier who rushes up to the cannon's mouth in a moment of excitement; but He was practically pouring out His life from the day when His public ministry commenced, if not before. He was always dying by living at such a rate that His zeal consumed Him. 2. It was most real and true. I pray you do not think of Christ as pouring out His soul, as though it made Him spend a sort of ecstatic life in dream-land, and suffer only in thought, intent, and sympathy. My Lord suffered as you suffer, only more keenly; for He had never injured His body or soul by any act of excess, so as to take off the edge from His sensitiveness. 3. See how complete it was. Jesus gave poor sinners everything. His every faculty was laid out for them. Put your trust in Him, then, without reserve. II. OUR LORD WAS NUMBERED WITH SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors." There is a touch of nearness to the sinner about this which there is not in the first clause. He bears death for the sinner; but you could not suppose, if you had not read it, that He would be written in the sinner's register. He was not, and could not be, a sinner; but yet it is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Is there a census taken of sinners? Then, the name of Jesus is written down. How was He numbered with the transgressors? This makes it the more marvellous, because it is so hurtful to a man who is pure, to be numbered with the impure. Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors—1. By the tongue of slander. They called Him a drunken man and a wine-bibber: they even called Him Beelzebub. That was sharp enough for Him to bear, whom all the angels salute as "Holy, holy, holy!" 2. In the earthly courts of justice. He stood at the bar as a common felon, though He was judge of all. Though they could not find witnesses whose testimony agreed, yet they condemned Him (Mark xv. 28). 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ, on earth, was treated, in the providence of God, as transgressors are treated. Transgression sometimes brings on men poverty, sickness, reproach, and desertion; and Jesus Christ had to take His share of all these with sinful men. All things in this world that are so keen and terrible to man, because man has become so guilty, were just as keen and terrible to Him. The nails that pierced Him tore His tender flesh as they would have torn that of the sinful. Fever parched Him till His tongue cleaved to His jaws. 4. The Holy God treated Him as if He were one of us. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." God not only turned His back on transgressors, but He turned His back upon His Son, who was numbered with them. III. The third matter by which the Lord Jesus Christ has won His victories, and earned reward of God, is this: "HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY." IV. The last thing is this: "HE MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS." Who among us will take up the part of the guilty? Who will plead for the guilty? I know, in certain cases, the lawyer will sell his tongue to the most polluted; but if a man were perfectly pure, you would not find him saying a word in defence of the guilty. So far as the man was guilty he could not be defended. But our Lord made intercession for transgressors. When He was here on earth how tender He was with transgressors! He bore on His heart the names of guilty men. He was always pleading their cause, and when He came to die he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He took their part. He would exculpate them if He could. I dare say that He has often prayed like that for you. Now He has gone up yonder He is pleading still. Application: (1) Jesus Christ does not shrink from sinners; ye sinners, do not shrink from Him. (2) As Jesus does not shrink from sinners, do not yourselves shrink from them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **He was numbered with the transgressors.**—*The Friend of sinners*:—I. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST

IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors." 1. In what sense are we to understand this? (1) He was numbered with them, in the census of the Roman empire. (2) Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors, and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors in the scroll of fame. Ask public rumour "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for Him. "This ——" they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. They called the Master of the house, Beelzebub! (3) But to make the matter still more forcible, "He was numbered with transgressors in the courts of law." The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of Him, "Thou blasphemest;" and they smote Him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God and against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The courts civil also asserted the same. (4) Then, the whole Jewish people numbered Him with transgressors; nay, they reprobated Him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. (5) His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe; for He is despised and rejected of men; of all men is He accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. 2. Why was Christ numbered with transgressors? (1) Because He could the better become their advocate. I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counsellor continually using the word "we;" he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. (2) That He might plead with them. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out of his abundant love to these prisoners he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity; but he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done aught that is wrong?" "I will not answer you that," saith he; "but if you will just refer to the calender you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! (3) That sinners may feel their hearts drawn to Him. (4) That we might be written in the red roll of His saints. II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BARE THE SINS OF MANY." 1. Here it is as clear as noon-day that Christ dealt with sinners. 2. As He did bear their sins, other texts tell us that He did bear them away. 3. There is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died. III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. "And made intercession for the transgressors." 1. He pleads for their forgivenesss. 2. He next prays that those for whom He intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ numbered with the transgressors:*—He became a sinner, though sinless—1. By imputation. 2. By reputation. (*J. Trapp.*) **Made intercession for the transgressors.**—*Christ's intercession for transgressors:*—Christ in this and such like actions is to be considered in a double regard—1. As a holy, godly man; so He was to fulfil all righteousness. 2. As a mediator and public person, that was to be our High Priest, to satisfy and intercede. (*T. Manton, D. D.*) *Christ's intercession:*—1. Who prayeth. Christ, one that could destroy them with His glory easily enough. 2. When He prayed. In the very act of His sufferings. 3. For whom He prayed. For them that offered Him all the indignities in the world. 4. How He prayed. He pleadeth for them; "Forgive them," etc. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus interceding for transgressors:*—Our blessed Lord made intercession for transgressors in so many words while He was being crucified, for He was heard to say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Our Lord fixed His eye upon that point in the character of His persecutors which was most favourable to them, namely, that they knew not what they did. He could not plead their innocence, and therefore He pleaded their ignorance. Our great Advocate will be sure to plead wisely and efficiently on our behalf; He will urge every argument which can be discovered, for His eye, quickened by love, will suffer nothing to pass which may tell in our favour. The prophet, however, does not, I suppose, intend to confine our thoughts to the one incident which is recorded by the evangelists, for the intercession of Christ was

an essential part of His entire life-work. Jesus Himself is the reasoning and logic of prayer, and He Himself is an ever-living prayer unto the Most High. It was part of our Lord's official work to make intercession for the transgressors. He is a Priest, and as such He brings His offering, and presents prayer on the behalf of the people. I. I have to direct your attention to our ever-living Lord making intercession for the transgressors; and I shall pray God that all of us may be roused to ADMIRATION FOR HIS GRACE. 1. If you will consider His intercession for transgressors I think you will be struck with the love, and tenderness, and graciousness of His heart, when you recollect that He offered intercession verbally while He was standing in the midst of their sin. Sin heard of and sin seen are two very different things. Our Lord actually saw human sin, saw it at its worst. He saw it all, and felt the sin as you and I cannot feel it, for His heart was purer, and therefore tenderer than ours: He saw that the tendency of sin was to put Him to death, and all like Him, yea and to slay God Himself if it could achieve its purpose, for man had become a Deicide and must needs crucify His God—and yet, though His holy soul saw and loathed all this tendency and atrocity of transgression, He still made intercession for the transgressors. 2. Another point of His graciousness was also clear, namely, that He should thus intercede while in agony. 3. But it is marvellous that He being pure, should plead for transgressors at all: for you and for me amongst them—let the wonder begin there. 4. Further, it is to me a very wonderful fact that in His glory He should still be pleading for sinners. 5. Again, it is gloriously gracious that our Lord should continue to do this. He hath never ceased to make intercession for transgressors. II. I do earnestly pray that we may be led of the Holy Ghost so to view His intercession for transgressors as to put our CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF. There is ground for a sinner's confidence in Christ, and there is abundant argument for the believer's complete reliance in Him, from the fact of His perpetual intercession. 1. Because His intercession succeeds. 2. There is reason for transgressors to come and trust in Jesus Christ, seeing He pleads for them. 3. I am sure, too, that if Jesus Christ pleads for transgressors as transgressors, while as yet they have not begun to pray for themselves, He will be sure to hear them when they are at last led to pray. 4. In order that our confidence may be increased, consider the effect of our Lord's intercession for transgressors. (1) Many of the worst of transgressors have been preserved in life in answer to Christ's prayer. (2) The gift of the Holy Spirit which is needful for the quickening of transgressors was the result of Christ's intercession. (3) It is through Christ's intercession that our poor prayers are accepted with God. (4) It is through the prayers of Christ, too, that we are kept in the hour of temptation. Remember what He said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," when Satan desired to have him and sift him as wheat. "Father, keep them from the evil" is a part of our Lord's supplication, and His Father hears Him always. (5) Indeed, it is because He pleads that we are saved at all. He is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." III. I pray that our text may inspire us with the spirit of OBEDIENCE TO HIS EXAMPLE. I take the example of Christ to be an embodied precept as much binding upon us as His written commands. 1. Imitate Him by forgiving all transgressions against yourself. 2. Imitate Christ, in pleading for yourselves. Since you are transgressors, and you see that Jesus intercedes for transgressors, make bold to say, "If He pleads for such as I am, I will put in my humble petition, and hope to be heard through Him." 3. If we have been forgiven our transgressions, let us now intercede for transgressors, since Jesus does so. 4. Let us take care, that if we do plead for others we mix with it the doing of good to them, because it is not recorded that He made intercession for transgressors until it is first written, "He bare the sin of many." 5. If Christ appears in heaven for us, let us be glad to appear on earth for Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Monarch becomes an intercessor for His foes* (with Luke xxiii. 34):—Here prophecy and history unite in taking us to the place which is called Calvary. I. IN WHAT LIGHT SHOULD WE REGARD THESE WORDS? II. WHAT IS THE REQUEST? For whom? "Forgive them," those who were the instruments and agents in His crucifixion. These were—1. The people. 2. The chief priests and scribes. 3. The rulers. 4. The soldiers. 5. The Roman governor. 6. The passers-by, who were reviling Him. 7. Those who were crucified with Him, joining in the mockery and jests. What is the plea by which the petition is urged? "They know not what they do." Not one of them knew the full extent of the crime. Not even the disciples could have estimated the guilt of the people (Acts iii. 16; 1 Cor. ii. 6). There was only One, even the Sufferer Himself, who

could view that sin in all its manifold complications, and hold evenly and righteously the scales of judgment. III. WHAT A SPIRIT OF LOVE THESE WORDS BREATHE! Their self-forgetfulness is wonderful. The sin of those thus wronging the Saviour was a far greater cause of distress to Him than all the degradation, ignominy, and pain He was enduring; on these things He could be altogether silent, in order to plead for the forgiveness of others' sin. We see here, too, a love which, rising above human repulsiveness and guilt, ever regards itself as sent to save; a love which would carry on a redeeming work, even when stretched in agony on the Cross. Here, too, is not only the love of One, whose saving energy could neither be repulsed nor trammelled, but of One who, though He is most fully acquainted with the greatness of their guilt, pleads before Him, to whom sin is an abominable thing, the mitigation of their crime. Truly, it is a marvel of comfort that He, who judges sin most exactly, deals with the sinner most tenderly! Here, too, is Divine love making intercession for the transgressors; not for the good, but for the bad; not for the penitent, but for the impenitent; that they may be brought to repent; showing us how Christ's love goes after men always, under all circumstances, in the lowest depths of guilt. Nevertheless, Divine love so pleads, as to imply that if this sin had been committed with full understanding of its enormity, He dared not have asked for its forgiveness. "*For* they know not what they do." Thus the spirit of this prayer has its terrors as well as its comforts. "There is a sin unto death," for which the Redeemer does not intercede, and for which we have no commission or authority to pray. Where that sin lies, what is its precise character, whether this or that man has committed it, we dare not say. We can tell four things about it:—we know the region in which it lies, the sign it has been committed, the sign it has not been committed, and why there is no mercy for it. Where one who has the fullest light indulges in the greatest sin, he is getting very near the unpardonable sin. The sign that it has been committed, would be hard, final, impenitence. True repentance is a sure sign it has not been committed. It is not pardonable, because at such a stage the sinner will not repent. IV. WHAT ARE THE DOCTRINES THESE WORDS INVOLVE? 1. They teach us that the Father saves us through the Son. 2. That sins of ignorance need forgiveness. Paul sinned "ignorantly in unbelief," and yet was the "chief of sinners." 3. Whatever palliation of guilt may be allowed, owing to ignorance, full recognition is taken thereof by the great Intercessor. 4. We are taught that the fuller the light the greater the sin (Heb. x. 26, 27). 5. That forgiveness of sin, by God, is so precious to us, because it is made over to us in perfect knowledge of every aggravation and mitigation. V. WHAT RESULTS DID THIS INTERCESSION SECURE? We are sure that this prayer was answered. It did not indeed avert the destruction of the doomed city, but—1. It secured the forgiveness of every penitent who might be, nevertheless, involved in its temporal disasters. 2. The Great Pleader's work soon proved its power in the salvation of the thief on the Cross, and shortly after of thousands more. 3. By means of the intercession of our Lord, begun on earth, and now carried on in heaven, we are "not under the law, but under grace." (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Meaning of intercession:*—The question, "What is meant by intercession?" being asked in a Sunday school, one of the children replied, "Speaking a word to God for us, sir." *Intercession for the transgressors:*—"I shall never forget," wrote Miss Plumptre to a friend, "the day of the sadness and the gladness of my heart, the day when a chafed and disappointed spirit found healing and rest in One whom I had done my utmost to be independent of. The joy of the astronomer over his newly-discovered planet is nothing to the rapture with which I gazed upon the word transgressors in the last sentence of Isaiah liii. 12: 'He made intercession for the transgressors.' I well remember being so dazzled that for a time I thought it a delusion, a misprint. It was something so altogether new to my proud, hard-working spirit, that I could almost wonder that I did not erase it and put in 'the penitent' or 'the humble' or one of nature's proud epithets. Yes, I think that word 'transgressors' was the first that ever glowed on me with all the attraction of 'free grace.'"

CHAPTER LIV.

VERS. 1–17. **Sing, O barren.**—*Jerusalem: barren, then fruitful:*—The direct address refers to Jerusalem, which resembled Sarah in her early barrenness and later fruitfulness (chap. li. 1–3). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The relation between Isaiah liii. and liv.*):—From Calvin to Ewald and Dillman, critics have all felt a close connection between chaps. lii. 13–liii. and chap. liv. "After having spoken of the death of Christ," says Calvin, "the prophet passed on with good reason to the Church: that we may feel more deeply in ourselves what is the value and efficiency of His death." Similar in substance, if not in language, is the opinion of the latest critics, who understand that in chap. liv. the prophet intends to picture that full redemption which the Servant's work, culminating in chap. liii., could alone effect. Two keywords of chap. liii. had been "a seed" and "many." It is "the seed" and the "many" whom chap. liv. reveals. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) The two chapters deal with the same subject from two distinct standpoints. Whatever view be held as to the Servant's personality, there is no doubt that His exaltation implies the restoration of Israel, and that His work is the indispensable condition of that restoration being accomplished. Thus while chap. liii. describes the inward process of conversion by which the nation is made righteous, chap. liv. describes the outward deliverance which is the result; and the impression is probably correct that the glowing hopes here uttered are sustained in the last resort by the contemplation of the Servant's mission as described in chap. liii. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Isaiah liv.* is peculiarly a missionary chapter. After the death and resurrection of the Saviour has been foretold, the great results that would follow thereon are appropriately described. In vers. 1–3, she that was "barren" (whether a reference is made to the Jews on their return from captivity, or to the Gentiles to whom the Gospel began to go forth on the day of Pentecost, or to the enlargement of the true Church by the gathering in of souls from Jews and Gentiles alike) is exhorted to rejoice in the increase of her offspring. God's mercy in gathering this Church and bestowing upon her His favour is described (vers. 4–10); the attractiveness of this Church follows (vers. 11, 12); and lastly (vers. 13–17) her establishment in righteousness and her permanence are set forth. (*W. H. Barlow, B.D.*) *The Church of the future:*—The prophecy of this chapter follows naturally on, and is a continuation of, that in the fifty-third. The former foretells "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The latter speaks of the Church, the foundations of which the Saviour died to lay, the superstructure of which He lives to build. I. WE HAVE A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH IN HER SADNESS. The figures used by the prophet, while easy enough to apply generally, present some points of difficulty when we attempt the detail. 1. At the first glance of the opening verses of the chapter we see that the figures are drawn from the very closest tie that nature knows, even that of the marriage relationship. This figure, so frequently used in the Old Testament, is based on a profound truth. The truth on which it is based is this: that as both male and female are incomplete without each other, so the happiness of God is incomplete without the love of the creature whom He has made to love Him, and the happiness of man is incomplete without an object above him in which his love can rest. Such a figure served a holy educating purpose to Israel, and ought still to do so to us. In one direction it shows us how holy and tender is the relationship between man and God, and how loving is the heart of God towards man; in another direction it lifts up the sacred tie of marriage into a higher and Diviner light, and lets us see it in the light of the Divine idea, as not only a union of bodies but also of spirits, in a tie which can never be broken without a rupture of the laws of God! 2. Another truth lying at the foundation of the chapter is this, that the Church, in God's eye, is seen at a glance, through all the vicissitudes of her chequered career, till her completion in the fulness of time. That Church, chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world," in Him is one. He sees that Church passing through gloom to glory! And truly, sad enough is the picture of the Church's sorrow which is presented here. She is like one whose husband has forsaken her. She is barren, desolate, rejected, contemned; and is consequently sad, afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. The chief question is, at what period was God's Church like this, and what Church was ever in such gloom? (1) The Hebrew Church was primarily intended. Her bondage in Egypt was "the shame of her youth," her captivity in Babylon was "the reproach of her widowhood."

(2) The figures would apply, to some extent, to that ideal Gentile Church which the Saviour saw in vision when He said, "Other sheep I have," etc., including all those in the east and west and north and south who were yearning after God, but to whom the Lord had not yet revealed His love, and who were not yet brought to rest in the Infinite heart of God. (3) The description will apply also to the whole Church of God now: which, during the transition period through which we are now passing, while the great problem of sin and its treatment is being worked out, is often in shade, often mourning the paucity of those who join her ranks, often the object of the world's ridicule and scorn! (4) The passage will befit also the individual believer, in whose chequered experience of sorrow, temptation and care all the varied phases of the troubles of the Church are presented in miniature. II. WE HAVE A SECOND PICTURE AS BRIGHT AS THE FIRST IS DARK. The second is given on account of the gloom of the first, for the special purpose of cheering the saints of God, throughout the period of shade. In the picture given with this view, an entirely different set of figures is made use of; even such as belong to the erection of a building. And there are, scattered throughout this chapter, no fewer than nine main features which go to make up the outline of this beauty and glory which, in spite of present gloom, the prophet sees far ahead. Regarding the Church of the future, then, under the figure of a building, let us observe—1. God Himself is the Founder of it. The foundation is Jesus Christ. 2. Men from every nation under heaven will gather within it. "The God of the whole earth shall He be called." The restrictions of the past shall be done away. 3. Righteousness shall be its basis (ver. 14). 4. Close and endearing relationship with God will be its privilege (ver. 5). "Thy Maker is thine Husband." He who formed you by the hand of His power, will make Himself known to you in the tenderest love. 5. Light will be its heritage. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (ver. 13). 6. Peace will be its possession. "Great shall be the peace of thy children" (ver. 13). 7. Beauty will be its adornment. "Behold I will set thy stones in stibium" (ver. 11). Stibium was a peculiar dye with which the Hebrew women tinged the eyelashes, in order that, being surrounded with this tinge, the beauty of the eye might flash forth more brightly. So the stones with which this building of God was to be erected, were to be set, as it were, in cement of so rich a dye as to set forth their lustre in richer beauty. "And thy battlements of rubies, thy gates of flashing gems, and all thy borders of precious stones." Thus the mineral world is made to yield its meed of illustration; its choicest gems are used as symbolic of the glory and beauty of the Church. Why? Because all beauty and glory of jasper, amethyst, ruby, sapphire, and pearl, when so set that their radiance gleams out most brilliantly, are but a reflection of that higher spiritual beauty of Him who created all. 8. Divine protection will be its safeguard (vers. 14, 15). "Thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they (thine enemies) shall surely gather together, but not by Me (not by My consent): whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake" (rather, shall fall upon thee). "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." Adverse weapons shall be blunted. Adverse tongues shall be condemned—both by the force of powerful argument, and by the mightier demonstration of a holy life (ver. 16). "I have created the waster to destroy," the same power which builds the Church, has created all her foes; hence the inference is inevitable, God will not suffer those who are opposed to Him to use their power so as to destroy that part of His work which He values most. 9. Perpetuity shall be its everlasting law (vers. 7–10). This is expressed in various forms of antithesis. Everything is wrapped up in this ninefold glory! (*C. Clemance, D.D.*)

"*Sing, O barren!*"—In the previous chapters we have heard the exiles summoned to leave Babylon, and beheld the Divine Servant becoming the Sin-bearer for them and the world. Here our attention is startlingly recalled to the desolate city of Jerusalem. "Barren;" "Forsaken;" "Desolate"—such are the terms applied to her by One who cannot err. And they are corroborated by the testimony of a contemporary (Neh. i. 3; ii. 3, 13–17). But how is this? Have we not learnt that the Mediator has put away sin at the cost to Himself of wounds and bruises, stripes and death? Is that redemption complete which fails to grapple with all the results and consequences of wrong-doing? This opens up a great subject, and one that touches us all. Though our sin is forgiven, yet certain consequences remain, of which that ruined city is a type. We cannot undo the past; God Himself cannot undo it. It can never be as though it had never been. The seventy years of captivity, the shame, the sorrow, the anguish to God, the forfeited opportunities,

the thistledown so thoughtlessly scattered! God can forgive; but these things cannot be altered now. I. THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. 1. We must distinguish between them and the punitive or penal. Suppose that a man is taken into custody for being drunk and disorderly. There are two results of that outbreak of uncontrolled passion; on the one hand he has broken the law of his country, for which a penalty of imprisonment or a fine must be inflicted; but on the other, and in addition, he has brought on himself the racking headache, the depression of spirits, the awful nervous reaction, which is the natural and inevitable result. These will pursue and scourge him as with the whip of the furies, even when his standing is adjusted with his country's laws. So, when we sin against God, two consequences accrue. 2. This distinction is Scriptural. When, in response to Nathan's parable, David broke the long silence, and cried, "I have sinned!" the prophet immediately answered, "The Lord hath put away thy sin;" but he added, "The sword shall never depart out of thy house." So far as the sin lay between God and David's soul, it was removed immediately on his confession; but, so far as the natural consequences were concerned, they followed him for many a long year. 3. These natural consequences are bitter to bear. II. HOW GOD OVERRULES SIN'S NATURAL CONSEQUENCES. Jehovah says, "Sing, O barren; break forth into singing, and cry aloud!" "How can I sing?" says Israel. "Nevertheless," is the Divine reply, "the time for singing is come. Sing, not because of what thou hast, but of what I have promised to give. Enlarge the place of thy tent; lengthen thy cords; strengthen thy stakes; make room for the incoming of a great host that shall own thee mother." "But the results of our backslidings remain. Thou canst not undo them, though Thou mayest forgive. Thou canst not give us back the seventy years of exile. Thou canst not obliterate the scar of bruise and wound and sore. Thou canst not intercept the inevitable recoil of our sins." Yet Jehovah answers, "O barren one! thou must sing as thou didst when thou camest from Egypt. Not with the same exuberant joy; but with a deeper insight into that grace which, in addition to its abundant pardon, can transform the irreparable past. So God our Father is able to make men and women in middle life sing again, as in the days of their youth, with a joy chastened by their memory of the failures and transgressions, which yet have yielded honey like the carcase of Samson's lion. As in the great world, Adam's sin has been overruled to the great enrichment of the race, so in the small world of our individual experience, we rise by our falls. Let us illustrate this in the history of the exile. Terrible as was the immediate loss inflicted by the national backsliding, demanding the penalty of the captivity, yet in three respects that captivity was overruled to enrich the religious life of the chosen people, and ultimately of the world. 1. They conceived new and enlarged ideas of God. They learnt that the Holy One of Israel should be called the God of the whole earth (ver. 5). 2. They better understood the nature of true religion. Before the captivity, in the estimation of the majority, it consisted in outward observances. In the captivity we first meet with the institution of the synagogue, where devout souls could worship God in simplicity and spirituality. 3. They realized their world-wide mission. So still. In those who have suffered from the results of their sins, there is a humility, tenderness, softness in speech, delicacy in understanding the temptations and failures of others, the soul of the prophet, the intercession of the priest, which are beyond price. Whilst we mourn our sins, and bitterly lament their cost and pain, yet we can see how God is at work taking up the very waste of our lives and making it up again into the fairest fabrics; as rich dyes are made from the produce of gas-retorts, and white paper from old and disused rags. In our exile we get new thoughts of God, of religion, and of our mission among men. Probably we should have reached them in some other way had we never wandered; but we may have learnt them under conditions which will for ever give a special flavour and tone to our affirmation of these mighty truths. III. WORDS OF HELP TO ANY WHO MAY BE SUFFERING FROM THE RESULTS OF PAST WRONG-DOING. The past cannot be altered; but it is a comfort to know that it can be forgiven, and the soul made white and clean. There is a world of difference between punishment and chastisement. God calls us back to Himself as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit. He knows the disappointment and shame of the downcast soul (ver. 6). He waits to gather with great mercies, and to show mercy with everlasting kindness (vers. 7, 8). Let us heed His call, and return to Him. We must also believe in His inalienable love. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Songs for desolate hearts:*—I. The text shall first of all be taken in its reference TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. For a long season before the coming of Christ the Church of God was desolate. Few were her sons and daughters. Her solemn feast-days were

attended by a multitude of hypocrites, and her courts were crowded with formalists, but the genuine children of Israel were sadly few; and when the Lord, the Husband of the Church, Himself arrived, the Church was in no happy condition. After that the Lord had been lain in the grave and risen again and ascended and left the Church, then were the days of refreshing, and the times of the visitation of the Spirit. At all seasons when the Church has been desolate and has become barren, God has appeared to her. II. I now intend to use the text in reference to ANY ONE CHURCH. 1. There are some separate Churches which are in a very sad condition, and may most truly be said to be barren and desolate. 2. Brethren will ask me what is their present duty as members of such Churches? Your duty is very plain. Labour to be conscious of the sad barrenness of the Church to which you belong. Spread the case before Jehovah, and be sure that you look away from everything that you yourself can do to Him, and to him alone. But mind you do not pray without proving the sincerity of your prayers by action. III. THE POOR HELPLESS SINNER HAS HIS CASE WELL DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHET AS BARREN AND DESOLATE. "Barren! ah, that I am. I have not one meritorious fruit that I can bring before God." You are desolate, too; no one can comfort you. Your barrenness is barrenness for ever if left to itself, and your desolation is utter and helpless unless some one intervene. May I ask you to look at the chapter which precedes my text? Jesus has taken the sinner's sin upon Himself, and made a complete atonement; therefore, "Sing, O barren!" The mighty Redeemer has come out of His dwelling-place, and has fought the enemy, and won the victory. "Sing, O barren!" IV. Does not this text belong to THE DEPRESSED BELIEVER? You and I, though we have brought forth some fruit unto the Lord Jesus, yet sometimes feel very barren. What are we to do? "Sing, O barren," etc. But what can I sing about? I cannot sing about the present; I cannot even sing concerning the past. Yet I can sing of Jesus Christ. What is my barrenness? It is the platform for Divine power. What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of His everlasting love. V. Our text ought to have a special voice to THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DOING GOOD. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Gentile Church a joyful mother:*—I. THE CHILDLESS MOURNER. The passage is the present heritage of the Gentile Church. Gentiledom was for a long time without a spiritual child. Now she may sing over a multitudinous family of true Christians. Addressed to the Jews as a prophecy—showing, in their sadness and depression, that though matters looked so dark for the cause of God now, yet there was a bright and blessed hope. Cheers them, not so much by showing grounds of present rejoicing, but by providing a telescope by which they might behold "the good time coming." We may here note—1. One great use of prophecy. It can cheer when things immediately around cause depression. (1) To a sad Church the minister should speak much of unfulfilled prophecy. (2) The Christian, in the "present distress" should do the same for himself (2 Pet. i. 19). 2. The imagery. It rings poetic changes on the idea of childlessness. Expressive imagery to Jewish women, who so longed for children, in hope of Messiah. (1) Such should be the Church's longing. Her prayer should be, "Give me children, or I die!" Bad sign when a Church seems content to be barren or to have no spiritual increase. (2) When she remains without new births (or conversions), she should mourn. Contemplate the once barrenness of Christendom. Its comparative barrenness in vast tracts now, even in Christian England! II. THE REJOICING MOTHER. Gentiledom for ages "unmarried"—"desolate." When Christ came, He "called her by name," and espoused her. Then how rapidly a family was brought forth. In Pentecostal times, what "multitudes were added to the Lord" (Acts vi. 7; xvi. 5). What joy this caused! (Acts ii. 46, 47, etc.) 1. The great subject of the verse, the joy of the Church in multitudes of conversions. This joy of the Lord is her strength (Neh. viii. 10). She is then encouraged to labour with fresh zeal and hope in works of evangelization. Therefore "new births" should be, as it were, registered; the successes of the Gospel should be published to evoke this healthful joy. Hence the reflex benefits of missionary gatherings. 2. Reasons for such joy. Not only because souls are saved, but because—(1) Increase is a sign that God's power is with His Church. (2) It confirms our own faith. The more they are who believe what we believe, the more confident we must feel in the truth of our faith. (3) It makes heaven appear attractive by the "sympathy of numbers." We may use the text as a test: How far are we in sympathy with the Church in joy over conversions to God? (*R. Glover, M.A.*)

Vers. 2, 3. Enlarge the place of thy tent.—*An enlarged Church:*—**The Jewish**

nation, after its return from captivity, never attained so remarkable a degree of prosperity and power as fully to answer all the terms of this prophecy. It is true that they became a very numerous people; so that from forty-two thousand, the number of those that went out of Babylon, they had increased to nearly three millions at the time of our Saviour's death; but they can hardly be said, in respect of territorial limits, to have broken "forth on the right hand and on the left," nor to have "inherited the Gentiles." We must therefore look for another interpretation of the prophecy; and we can be in no doubt as to its application to the Church of God. (*C. J. Blomfield, D.D.*) *Jew and Gentile in one Church:*—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied," are words of comfort interposed amidst forebodings of suffering and woe; and the mode of their accomplishment is more clearly pointed out by an image drawn from the habits of pastoral life, familiar to the people of eastern countries, where the nomad chief, as his family, and cattle, and goods increase, finds it necessary to "enlarge the place of" his "tent, and" to "stretch forth the curtains of" his "habitation." Under this image is represented the gradual increase of the Church, from the moment when, to human eyes, it appeared to have been crushed by the disgrace and death of its Founder, to the time when the "fulness of the Gentiles" shall have "come in," and God's ancient people shall be brought back to the same fold with them, and all "the kingdoms of this world" shall "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." (*Ibid.*) *Enlargement:*—According to the prophet the relation of God to His people is a relation that assures enlargement of beneficence on every hand. God and His Church are not locked up together, in some secret place, enjoying spiritual luxuries, whilst all the world is dying of starvation. If we could find such a hint in the Scripture we should burn the book. The Scripture is all for enlargement. The feast cannot be increased; but if it were needful to increase the space within which the guests are to be accommodated God would thrust back the horizon, rather than any man should starve for want of room to sit down in. If any messenger shall return, saying, "Yet there is room," God would send that messenger out again to compel the hungering and homeless to come that they might enjoy a Father's gracious bounty. So we find in the opening verses of this chapter—enlargement. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *William Carey and missions:*—William Carey's sermon on this text, preached at Nottingham, marked an epoch in the history of Christianity, for it aroused the Church of Christ to a sense of its responsibility for the conversion of the heathen and the evangelization of the world. The interest awakened by that sermon led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, and to the ushering in of the Evanglistic era, which has already brought a great revenue of glory to Christ, and priceless blessings to every branch of His Church. From this remarkable text Carey deduced and enforced two important practical principles, which were afterwards embodied in the motto of the Baptist Mission—"Attempt great things for God." "Enlarge," "stretch forth," "lengthen," "strengthen." "Expect great things from God" (ver. 4). If Carey had done nothing but shape this formula for evangelistic work, he would have achieved much for the cause he loved so dearly. It is easily remembered. Rather, it is not easily forgotten. (*J. T. McGaw, D.D.*) *The enlargement of the Church:*—The tent is the simplest and most primitive form of the human habitation. Wherever a pole can be found, with cords or strips of leather, a little bark or cloth or canvas or skin, a tent can be set up—as easily struck as pitched, and almost as easily enlarged; for when the growing necessities of a family demand larger shelter and room, all you have to do is to get a little longer pole, a little thicker cords, a little more bark or skin or canvas, and you can stretch forth the curtains of your habitation to accommodate the needs of the growing family. And so this is made the type of the enlargement of the canopy of the Church over her growing family of children. "Thou shalt burst forth," as the Hebrew is—the grand old Hebrew—"Thou shalt burst forth on the right and on the left." A symmetrical growth in this direction and that direction alike; not like a family that has a one-sided development—she is going to gather her children from east and west and north and south, and every clime and every tongue and every people; and because her family is to come from all quarters of the earth, her canopy must stretch to every quarter of the earth to cover her increasing family. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *"Lengthen" and "strengthen":*—What is the duty of the Church in these days? "Lengthen" and "strengthen." The word "lengthen" suggests extensity; the word "strengthen" suggests intensity, and there is always danger in extensive movement that is not accompanied by intensive movement.

You are lengthening your cords, but if you do not strengthen your stakes what will happen? Your lengthening your cords will be a disaster to you and the tent itself. 1. How shall we lengthen cords? By sending out our organizations in every direction—a cord here to Europe, another cord to Asia, another to Africa, and another to the islands of the sea. Towards the North Pole and the South Pole; in every direction, from the great centres of Christendom, let your missionary organizations reach! With the enterprise that has dash and push in it let these cords be carried to the ends of the earth, until the network of missions overspreads the whole family of man! And, if we are going to have this lengthened cord you must add your own length to it. As, when we rescue a man from a burning building, and the ladder will not reach those that are in peril, the fireman stands on the top rung of the ladder and adds his own length, over which men and women climb down into safety, so if you are going to have this organization reach over the world in a spirit of hallowed enterprise till the canopy is co-extensive with the family of man, your length has got to be added to the cord. You have read of the self-sacrifice of the Carthaginian maidens when they cut off their raven ringlets that they might be braided into bowstrings for Hannibal's archers; or of the Tyrian maidens when they sacrificed their golden hair for cordage for the Tyrian navy. The cords of enterprise by which this Gospel is to be carried to the ends of the earth are woven out of the very fibres of human hearts! You cannot make them with money, and you cannot make them with commercial interests, and you cannot make them with public enthusiasm. They are woven on the loom of personal consecration in the secret place with God. 2. We must not only have lengthened cords, but strengthened stakes. If there is one weak stake on the circumference of a tent, and it pulls out or is broken, then it puts a greater stress on the other tent-pegs round it, and one by one they are loosened or pulled out, until the whole tent collapses. What does that mean? It means that any Church on the circumference of Christian effort that does not plant itself firmly to hold up the cord of organization is responsible for the collapse of Christian missions. And it means that any man or woman or child in the Church of God, among God's professed believing children, that does not become a stake down deep into the ground and holding on, is responsible for any disaster that comes to the whole work of Christ by lack of personal co-operation. (*Ibid.*) *Strengthening the stakes:*—How are you going to strengthen the stakes? 1. By faith in Almighty God. This is His work. 2. By the power of believing prayer. A beloved Japanese convert and trainer of native teachers said with his dying breath, "Advance on your knees." 3. By a firm confidence in this Gospel as the Gospel of Christ, and that this Word is the Word of God. 4. We must have sanctified giving. 5. Holy living. Stanley says that he owes to the months he spent with Livingstone the transformation of his character; and yet Livingstone never said a word to him about his soul's salvation. (*Ibid.*) *The Church's duty and encouragements:*—I. THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH. II. HER ENCOURAGEMENTS. (*A. W. Brown, M.A.*) *Foreign missions:*—I. THE MAGNITUDE AND SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF OUR OBJECT. The conversion of the world. We know that the conversion of the world is not our work, but God's. But we also know that the Lord works with suitable instruments, and that the degree of our success may be influenced by our devotedness, and the skill with which we adapt our efforts to our end. The conversion of the world! Who can realize what that means? I think of one soul living and dying in rebellion against God—of its possibilities for misery and for mischief—how much it may itself endure, how much injury it may inflict, how much grief occasion, throughout God's holy universe? I think of that soul as converted, of the blessedness it may experience, the beneficent influence it may exert, the joy its conversion will diffuse throughout the ranks of sinless intelligences. Of the sublime satisfaction with which He will regard it, who for its sake endured the Cross and despised the shame, when it becomes a jewel in His crown, a trophy of His saving love and power, fruit of His soul's travail. Then I extend the thought to the countless myriads of the human race whom that soul represents, and of whom the same thing may be predicated. The thought is to me absolutely overpowering. "Oh, the magnitude—the momentous importance of the object at which we aim! Oh, the miserable smallness of the means we use for such a purpose!" II. THE VASTNESS OF THE FIELD NOW OPEN TO US. With more force than at any previous period of the world's history we can say of missions, "The field is the world." III. THE FACILITIES WE NOW HAVE FOR CARRYING ON OUR WORK. The Lord in His high providence has furnished the Church with most favourable opportunities of

conducting her great enterprise in all parts of the earth. IV. THE MISERABLE CONDITION AND URGENT CLAIMS OF THE HEATHEN. V. THE DIVINE INTEREST IN THIS GREAT ENTERPRISE. VI. THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER WHICH WE ARE LAID BECAUSE OF THE FAVOURS WE HAVE RECEIVED. Forgiven rebels as we are, our forgiveness having been procured for us by the sufferings and death of our Lord, and granted to us as the gift of His grace; redeemed by His blood as we are from the destruction which was pending over us; admitted as we are to all the privileges of loyal and obedient subjects, free access into the Divine presence, not only permission, but encouragement to make known to God the desire of our hearts, with the assurance that He hears us always; born as we are of the Spirit into the Divine family, made children and heirs of God, entitled to call God Father; delivered as we are from the fear of hell, and animated by the hope of a glorious immortality; indebted as we are to the influence of the Gospel even for those temporal blessings which are so conducive to our comfort and enjoyment during the present life, and in respect of which we can truly say, "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage;" honoured by God in being called as we are to share in His great work of winning the world to Himself, by which He shows how completely He has forgiven us, and what confidence He places in us; assured, too, that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"—is not ours confessedly a position of unspeakable privilege? What are we doing? Compare our actions with our object and our obligations. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) *Arguments for missions:*—1. Christ owns the whole world. 2. The Gospel of Christ is adapted to all men. 3. Our Lord's commission to the apostles contemplates a universal kingdom. (*J. T. McGaw, D.D.*) *Modern missions:*—1. This great utterance fell from the lips of a man who had newly seen God, and caught thereby an original conception of His redemptive work for the world through captive and desolate Israel. No one can miss the meaning of this joyous outburst. It is an evangel. *Sursum corda*, he cries. Do not give way to repining though you are lonely and heartsore as a childless woman. Say not "my tent is destroyed and all my tent-pins are plucked up: my children are gone away and there is none to spread out my tent any more, or to set up my tent-curtains" (Jer. x. 20). Get up and make your tent-pins strong: lengthen your cords and fasten your plugs. Be not content with a little space. Roominess and magnificence befit your prospects. Your expulsion will be your expansion, your desolation your increase, your captivity your exaltation. The area covered by your race shall be larger than of yore. The prophet could speak that word of hope and endeavour because he had received his new vision of God. Insight was the warrant for utterance. He knew the meaning of the Exile through his purer conception of the character and purposes of Jehovah. He saw the supreme and universal sovereignty of God; the universal brotherhood of man; the essential spirituality of the Hebrew religion, that it could and would exist without a temple and without a priest, without an altar and without a land, without anything save the soul and God; that it was to cease to be a local religion and become universal, and instead of remaining a national luxury would become an aggressive missionary and world-saving agency. He looked along the highways of the future, and saw the approach of the delivering God, and cried, "Behold your God!" Man has a fatal and pathetic facility both for losing himself and his best treasures. Apostolic Christianity went everywhere preaching the Word. It was essentially aggressive. It placed itself by the side of the ancient religions of Greece and Rome, always absorbent of their good, but finally replacing them by its richer ideas and stronger spiritual impulses. The fires of the Christ-given passion to save all men burnt on, although alas! with diminishing intensity, for more than two centuries. The Reformation itself had little or no missionary passion, and the desponding leader said, with unfathomable sadness—a fore-gleam of the agony and pity that stirred the Churches at a later date: "Asia and Africa have no Gospel; another hundred years and all will be over. God's Word will disappear for want of any to preach it." Surely not, O prophet of God! The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. When the night is darkest, then up leap the stars. The living God is always at work. An astronomer gazed so long on the sun that he could see nothing else. The image was burned into him. For years before May 31, 1792, the vision of God as the God of Missions had arrested, held, moulded, and swayed the soul of Carey. Isaiah repeats Micah, Luther repeats the psalmist, Carey repeats the prophet, and so the Word of the Lord has free course and is multiplied. 2. It is a revealing fact that, though Carey gained his message

from the words of prophecy, he expressed it in the simple and characteristic language of the closing years of the eighteenth century—the century of the expansion of England and of the great evangelical revival. "Expect great things," said he—in that he voiced the thought of his generation; "expect them from God"—in that he expressed the knowledge and insight of men taught by the Spirit. 3. George Sand reminds us: "It is the heart that governs the world; it is feeling that performs the real miracles of history." Carey's persistent determination that the Church should evangelize the world was fed by what Vinet calls "the passion for souls." His perception of evil was acute. His sense of sin strong. His reliance on Christ unhesitatingly entire. He scarcely seems to have had a thought apart from Christ and His salvation. And yet at the root of all, and over all, and through all was a self-consuming love of men, of all men, and of "heathen" men most of all; and therefore forgetting himself this one thing he did, he founded modern missions by the gift of himself, out and out, in serving and suffering so that he might save men. Ah! it is here we fail. We do not love men for their own sake or for God's sake. We need to change our style; it is cramped and fettered. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*)

Spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes.—*Happy influence of foreign missions on the Church*:—The whole passage refers to the conversion of the heathen; and furnishes the important suggestion, that there is no system of means so well calculated to give expansion and stability to the Church of Christ as foreign missionary operation. There are several reasons which are supposed by many to favour the opinion, that Christian exertion is less productive among pagan nations than at home. 1. There are preliminary barriers which oppose the efforts of the missionary, and which do not exist in Christian lands. The most important are strange languages, and strong prejudices. There is also the systematic and stubborn opposition which the Gospel meets from the established forms of civil government and pagan superstition. Further, there is the risk and waste of life which foreign missionary labour involves. This, however, is but one view of the subject. There are arguments which favour the opposite opinion—that the direct results of Gospel efforts are greater in pagan than in Christian lands. Among the reasons for such an opinion, is that one which induces almost all ministers of the sanctuary to exchange the sphere of their labour at home; and which would, if they were consistent with their principles, send great numbers of them abroad. The souls to be saved are much more numerous—much more needy. Another reason is, the means of usefulness are both more various and extensively operative. A further reason is the activity of native converts. 2. We believe that foreign missions are the best means of lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of the Church, because they establish and promote an action and reaction between themselves and the Churches, which is most powerful and advantageous to both parties. This may be demonstrated by several facts. I. MISSIONARY LABOUR INCREASES THE PIETY AND ENERGY OF THE CHURCHES. The missionary spirit includes among its essential endowments, faith, prayer, self-denial, deadness to the world, charity, beneficence, heavenly-mindedness, a willingness to submit to sufferings and hazards, and a supreme regard for the glory of God. 1. There is the stimulus of example, than which nothing is more influential. Hold up to the Churches those with whom they are under equal obligations, but who have far exceeded them in the "work of faith, and labour of love," and you bring a motive to bear upon them which piety cannot resist. 2. It operates through sympathy. Our work, our aim, our strongest desires, our highest honour, our dearest interests, our eternal recompense are the same. 3. There is the duty and blessedness of necessary co-operation. 4. It diverts the mind from those unimportant points of doctrinal difference, and metaphysical distinction and abstruse speculation, which squander the time and pervert the talents, and ruin the souls of thousands. 5. It operates, too, through the influence of its own greatness. It expands the mind, liberalizes the soul, elevates the aim; arouses faculties and feelings which nothing else could have addressed; and produces effects and results which no other object could command. II. MISSIONARY OPERATIONS NOT ONLY INCREASE THE PIETY AND ENERGY OF THE CHURCHES, BUT GREATLY ASSIST IN SUPPLYING THEIR DOMESTIC DESTITUTION. Many a converted youth has had his attention directed to the ministry through the reading of missionary journals. When we speak of the vigour which missionary exertions throw into our domestic institutions, we refer to a very natural operation. That man who has courage to attempt a great enterprise, despises the difficulties of a small one. The energy produced by the one, overlooks all the appalling trifles of the other. III. THE CHURCH, THROUGH MISSIONARY EFFORTS, PLACES HERSELF IN THE BEST, AND, INDEED, IN THE ONLY POSITION FOR RECEIVING

THE MOST ABUNDANT SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. 1. These efforts have a direct tendency to remove the most serious obstructions to piety and efficiency. Where the work of evangelizing the world is carried on with energy, it indicates and produces self-denial and liberality. We need not stop to show that nothing is more repugnant to eminent holiness, or usefulness, than a selfish parsimonious spirit. It is abhorrent in the eyes of a holy God (Isa. lvii. 17). 2. They secure to us those promises which are connected with enlarged exertions (Prov. xi. 25; Isa. lviii. 10, 11). IV. IT MUST ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE THE CHURCH STILL MORE TO EXTEND HER LIMITS, AND THUS TO RETURN TO THE HEATHEN WORLD THE FULL INFLUENCE OF HER IMPROVED CONDITION. Application: This subject teaches, that lengthening the cords of the Church is strengthening her stakes. (*D. Abeel.*)

Ver. 4. **Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed.**—*Shame:*—Here, as in many other cases, shame includes the disappointment of the hopes, but with specific reference to previous misconduct (Job vi. 20). The first clause declares that the Church has no cause for despondency, the second disposes of the causes which might seem to be suggested by her history. The essential meaning is, thy former experience of My displeasure. (*J. A. Alexander.*) **Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth.**—*Shall I remember my sins in heaven?*—In looking forward to heaven, two questions have stirred the minds and hearts of most Christians: "Shall I remember my sins in heaven?" and "If I remember my sins in heaven, will not the recollection mar my joy, and interfere with my blessedness?" These questions are not idle. They originate with that consciousness of depravity which is the first step towards our personal salvation, and they recur in connection with the dispensation of Divine mercy. Our condition prompts the inquiry, and the reply will reveal to us the unsearchable riches of Divine grace. The questions resolve themselves into this: Will the dispensation of Divine mercy, when it has done its work, blot out all the mischievous consequences of sin? The text guides our reply. There was a people taken up by God when in circumstances of great degradation. They are brought into the closest connection with Him—into such a connection as that the conjugal union is the best possible representation of it. God is faithful to this people, but they are faithless to Him. He institutes means to bring them back to Himself, and He does bring them back. Then, speaking of their restoration, He says, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed," etc. In the realization of their restoration, they shall (in a certain sense) forget their apostacy. We declare our belief that, in heaven, you will not so remember your sins as to have your happiness interfered with by the recollection, and that whatever remembrance you have of the apostacy and depravity, will rather be the occasion of increasing your blessedness and joy, than of interfering with the one, or of marring the other. The remembrance of sin did exist under the Levitical dispensation; but in the dispensation of Christ there is nothing at all analogous to the annually recurring day of atonement (Heb. x. 17). So far as our intercourse with God and the cherishing of bright prospects are concerned there is to be a complete forgetfulness of sin. With respect to heaven, we put before you two remarks. I. THERE IS A RECOLLECTION INEVITABLE. The identity of passions will involve an identity of consciousness. What are the recollections which are inevitable? 1. "I was a sinner." 2. "I was restored to God by such means and under such influences." II. THERE IS A REMEMBRANCE OF SINS IMPOSSIBLE. There is one suggestion that seems of importance here. It is that by and by memory will not be the faculty chiefly exercised and put forth. When is it that we live most in the past? It is when we are sad. In heaven there will be no sadness, no solitude, no fear, no carefulness. Memory, therefore, will not be goaded as now. Memory will then have an inferior place. Observation and penetration will be the chief mental exercises of heaven. A man will be surrounded by objects of intense interest, all connected with God. The commanding recollection of sin will therefore be impossible. The remembrance of sin in heaven will always be connected with the consciousness that sin has been blotted out. This will awaken thankfulness; and joy, with gratitude, will flow through the soul as a large and mighty river. Nothing in God's conduct in heaven will put sin forward. Then, within yourselves there will be complete and conscious holiness. Look at another fact. You may have had companions here in iniquity, but you will have no unsaved companions in sin with you there. You may recognize persons with whom you trod the broad road, but you will there recognize them as redeemed beings; and, just as in your own case, the commanding thought is not sin but forgiveness, so with them the commanding association will be the wonderfulness of their redemption; not the depth of their

apostacy and the length of their wanderings; so that their presence, instead of forcing upon you a remembrance of guilt, will only magnify before your eye and your heart the unsearchable riches of God's grace and mercy. You will be employed by and by. Your employment will be all-absorbing, and it will be constant. Why should we talk to you about this? If you have a secret idea, or rather an impression, that there must be some limitation to God's mercy, that it will not secure all this blotting out, what is the consequence? The effect is to limit your application to this provision—you do not take full advantage of the riches of God's mercy. (*S. Martin.*) *God's gift of forgetfulness*:—To many religious people the burden of the past is the heaviest of their lives. No difficulties and trials of the present can match it for bitterness. They look forward calmly and hopefully to whatever the years may bring. Even the valley of the shadow has little terror for them, believing as they do that they will be shepherded through that to the eternal fold. And yet they are often weighted by a sore burden of the past; they are hag-ridden by shadows of dead days. Sometimes it is the very greatness and success and joy of the past which induce this constant recollection. But the burden of the past, which is more in keeping with the thought of our text, is not the recollection of some joy or success, but of some failure, some sorrow, some loss, some sin, some shame. And to some who live ever under the shadow of this memory it would mean new life to them if the promise came to them with the meaning it had in the prophet's lips, "Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." Of course, there is a certain sense in which we cannot forget, and are not meant to forget. Experience has its lessons to teach. All religion begins with repentance, and the appeal to repentance is an appeal to memory. But the promise of our text is a tacit condemnation of the sentimental brooding on the past, whatever that past may be, which weakens the present life, which keeps a man from gathering up the fragments of his life that remain, keeps him from doing his duty calmly, and giving himself to whatsoever things are true and pure and lovely and of good report. If we believe in the eternal love of God we must not let any pale ghost of the past, spectral figures of the night, chill our blood and keep us from our pilgrimage. Do not fear that this Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sin will make sin easy; it is the only thing that can make sin impossible—the light that drives out the darkness, the love of God that fills the heart and leaves no room for evil, not even for evil memory. (*Hugh Black, M.A.*) *A blessed forgetfulness*:—"The reproach of thy widowhood" clearly refers to the period of the exile when Zion regarded herself as cast off by Jehovah. The sense of "the shame of thy youth" is less obvious. Since the conception has some affinities with the striking allegory in Ezek. xvi., it is probable that the reference goes back to the origin of the nation (Ezek. xvi. 4–8), the reference being rather to the Egyptian oppression. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Forgetting the shame of youth*:—A man who had lived for many years the Christian life, told me how there was a place in a street in Edinburgh which was associated with a sin. Every time in his early life he passed it, it brought back again the keen remorse and shame. It seemed to stain his life afresh whenever he saw the very place. But when he came to God and gave his heart and life to Christ, the first time he passed that place afterwards his soul was filled by a great transport of joy that all that was done, that it was no longer part of his life, that God had forgiven and forgotten and cast it behind His back. And he entered, for a moment at least in foretaste, into the perfect joy of soul, and he forgot the shame of his youth and remembered the reproach no more. (*Hugh Black, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **For thy Maker is thine Husband.**—*The Lord His people's husband*:—I. CONSIDER SOME THINGS WHICH ARE IMPLIED IN THIS RELATION WHEREIN CHRIST STANDS TO HIS PEOPLE, THAT NATURALLY TEND TO ENCOURAGE THEIR FAITH AND JOY IN HIM. 1. This relation intimates that nearness and union which there is between Christ and His Church. Among men the marriage union is the nearest and most strict of any that can possibly be. And because there is no higher allusion whereby to express the union of believers to Christ, the Holy Ghost useth this to give us the more lively apprehension of this admirable privilege (Eph. v. 30); 1 Cor. vi. 17). 2. In this relation is implied the greatest love and tenderest affection. 3. The utmost care of and concern for those who are espoused. 4. The utmost pity and sympathy. 5. The having all convenient supplies which are in the power of a tender husband to give. 6. The relation of a husband gives his spouse a right to share with him everything that is properly his. II. SHOW THE GROUND OR REASON WHICH HIS PEOPLE HAVE TO DEPEND UPON HIS ANSWERING TO THEM ALL THAT IS

THUS INCLUDED UNDER THIS RELATION OF A HUSBAND. III. MAKE PROPER IMPROVEMENT OF THE WHOLE. 1. This affords us an admirable instance of the riches of Divine grace, and the wonderful condescension of the Son of God, that He should demean Himself in such a manner as not to be ashamed of being styled a husband to such sinful worms as the best of His people are. 2. If it be the happiness of all God's people that their Maker is their Husband; how much does it stand us in stead to examine whether we are of this number? 3. Does Christ stand in this relation to His people? This may administer matter of great comfort and joy to them at all times, and under all circumstances. 4. If believers are Christ's spouse, how heinous and aggravated must their wilful trangressions be? 5. From the relation believers stand in to Christ we learn that the most ardent affection is due to Him from all His chosen. 6. This also teaches us how highly it concerns every Christian to pay a just regard to all the ordinances of our glorious Redeemer, and to take great satisfaction in yielding obedience to Him therein. How pleasant is it to a loving and an affectionate wife to wait in those paths in which her kind and absent spouse had appointed to meet her. 7. This relation Christ stands in to His people calls for their cheerful and constant dependence upon Him. (*E. Walker.*) *The Divine Husband:*—I. THE DOCTRINE THESE WORDS CONTAIN. 1. "Husband" means house-band—the head and band of the family. Hence the word denotes unison, community of interests, and special affection. 2. We learn that the Maker of all things, who fainteth not, condescends to bear to His creatures the closest and most sacred relationship. In Hosea ii. 19, 20, He says—"I will betroth thee unto Me for ever." And the Christian in reply says, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." The parallel is carried on in the New Testament (Matt. ix. 14, 15). St. Paul refers to it—"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church." 3. Observe that in the original the word is in the plural—"Thy Makers are thy Husband," evidently alluding to the Trinity. We learn, then, that the love of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, all pertain to saving, blessing, and comforting those who love God. II. THE APPLICATION OF THE TRUTHS TO OURSELVES. 1. The wonderful sympathy of our God. He feels for our woes. We see a picture of widowhood, orphanage, a woman bereaved, forsaken in spirit. What volumes of suffering are depicted in the words mourning, solitude, and woe! So with orphanage, want of protection, and love. To them our Redeemer speaks, and Christ repeats the promises, for He says to His disciples, "I will not leave you orphans." The Divine Being cannot see His children suffer. He will be their Husband, Friend, and Protector. 2. The wonderful efficacy of our God's assistance. He will be the Husband of His people. This indicates nearness of relationship. It also indicates His right to help. The husband is the natural protector, stay, and support of his wife. It is he who makes all things conduce to the safety and happiness of his household. 3. The wonderful efficiency of our God's protection. "Thy Maker is Thy Husband." It is as if He said, He who is able to create thee is also able to preserve. And, oh, what is implied in that word "Maker!" What power, what skill, what marvellous foresight! And all is concentrated also in human preservation. Here is a word to the bereaved, the sorrowing, the tried, the longing. Here is a fulness for him that craves for sympathy and yearns for love. Here is blessedness for him that desires peace and protection. (*Homilist.*) *Christ the Husband of His Church:*—I. THE DIGNIFIED CHARACTER OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 1. His creating power. "Thy Maker." 2. His glorious sway. "The Lord of hosts is His name." 3. His redeeming love. "Thy Redeemer." 4. His spotless holiness. "The Holy One of Israel." 5. His universal dominion. "The God of the whole earth." II. THE INTERESTING NATURE OF THE UNION. 1. Its qualities. (1) It is gracious in its origin. (2) Powerful in its accomplishment. (3) Spiritual in its nature. (4) Permanent in its duration. 2. Its privileges. (1) Communion. (2) Riches. (3) Protection. 3. Its terms. (1) Undivided affection. (2) Mutual consent. Conclusion: 1. I hail those who are married to the Lord. 2. I would address such as are wedded to sin. What profit? etc. (*E. Temple.*) *God as Husband:*—If I marry the Merchant, the old Puritans said in their quaint and homely fashion, all His wares shall be mine. **The God of the whole earth.**—*The mission of the Jewish nation:*—A candle does not belong to the candlestick that holds it, but to every one in the room where it shines; and the knowledge of God, the preciousness of the Divine revelation, does not belong to the nation in which it is first and most clearly disclosed. They hold it as a torch; but it is that all may have the benefit of its shining. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The God of the whole earth:*—If God is the God of the whole earth, He must be the God of the whole earth just as it is; and I remark that while believers in the true God were tribal and

national, the natural mistake which was made, and which should put us on our guard lest we fall into it again in substance, was that of supposing that God was in a special manner the God of a particular class. So let us not forget that if He is the God of the whole earth He is the God of all those physical conditions under which men are born. He is the God of those laws of descent which make the character of the parent go down to the children through many generations. He is the God of those decrees by which the drunkard's children inherit the drunkard's proclivities; by which deceit propagates deceit; by which honour breeds honour; by which motives brought to bear upon parents have an effect on the welfare of their children reaching down to the depths of futurity. He is the God of the climate in which every person lives—of that climate which drives the Esquimaux under ground during most of the months of the year, and that climate which brings the swarthy African all the year into the open air, without clothes and without a dwelling. If He is the God of all the earth, then He is the God that establishes those laws which determine the occupations of men, and their characters, in a large degree. He is the God of the physical globe, in this sense: that whatever affects men by its nature, by its unconscious and continuous influence upon them, is of His ordination. Being the God of the whole earth, He is the God of the mountains and of the valleys; of the winter and of the summer; of industry and of commerce; of all the arrangements of life by which men are influenced. Men's places of abode, and their nature, are largely determined by their circumstances; and these circumstances are God's decrees. (*Ibid.*) *An unchristian patriotism*:—God is the God of all nations. The Bible says that He is the God of all the earth, and I suppose there are people enough in other nations besides our own to occupy a considerable part of His sympathy and heart and attention. Well, patriotism is a good thing, but when patriotism is the influence that separates us from the other nations of the earth, it is a very narrow, mean thing, it is only another name for selfishness. (*Ibid.*) *All nations and all classes belong to God*, the superior and the inferior; the men of knowledge belong to God's sympathy and care, the men of virtue, the men of great acquisitions, the men of great capacity to acquire, the active, the popular, the administrative, the successful men; they are all the Lord's because they are men. And the poor, and the lower classes, the lowest, the very slaves are all God's. I have sometimes thought that He reveals more of Himself to them than He does to their superiors. In other words, their utter helplessness, the necessity of leaning upon something to support them in their weakness, has brought them into such moods of mind, that God has shown some elements and attributes of His character to them, to true Christian slave mothers and fathers, that other men have not had. There are things that happen among them that look as much like miracles as those in the Gospels. There are things that happen among them that look almost as if God had opened the heavens and had personally spoken to them. It agrees with the exhibition of the sympathy of God, to give ourselves to the lower rather than to the higher, because they need it most. (*Ibid.*) *God's fourfold relationship*:—There are four great names by which Almighty God is most commonly called in Christendom—Creator, King, Judge, Father. The first and last, Creator and Father, are probably absolute and literal descriptions of Him; there is no other Creator but He, and all parentage but shadows the great fact of His Fatherhood. The other two names, King and Judge, are figurative and illustrative only. But all four are revealed names; authorized names; names given by God Himself to the yearning, importunate inquiries of men who, like wrestling Jacob, cry to Him, "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name." We must know God by more than His names if we are in any true sense to know Him; we must realize His presence; be quickened by His life; the presence everywhere revealed; the life everywhere felt. Yet on a consideration of each of His names we may find some interpretation of what is meant by the declaration that He is "the God of the whole earth." I. He is the God as being the Creator of the whole earth. The earth would not have come into existence, and would not be to-day, but for the will, the power, the goodness of God. In the architecture of the whole earth there is God's design; in the structure there is God's might; in both there is God's love. II. He is the God as being the King of the whole earth. Kingship is often a very conventional conception; royalty often a very conventional idea. Back of it all, in essential reality, is intended, not pomp and splendour, not rank and arbitrary authority, but genuine supremacy, the supremacy that must govern, that ought to control, and the glory that is inherent in such supremacy. We do not find much help to understanding the government of God in the kings and queens whose empire is but as an inch, whose reign an hour. Christ's kingship, and not Cæsar's, nor Alexander's, nor Solomon's, nor Pharaoh's, is the true

specimen of monarchy, of Divine sovereignty. He is Lord of a moral dominion, King of a spiritual empire, and yet, when He willed it, His sceptre controlled material nature, multiplying the handful of loaves and fishes into a sudden harvest by a touch, and calming the tempestuous winds and waves by a word. III. He is the God as being the JUDGE of the whole earth. A world in which there is iniquity demands a Judge. Nay, the necessities of God's own righteous nature compel Him to be a Judge. The whole earth's God must be a universal Judge; between nations like France and Madagascar, between man and man, and between man and law, the God of all must be the supreme Judge. Unerring in His all-pervading knowledge, righteous in His infinite inspiration, infallible in His verdicts, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" IV. He is the God as being the FATHER of the whole earth. The heart of humanity cries, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," and Jesus, by the words of His lips and by the works of His hands—yet more exceedingly by His Cross, by His character, and by His Spirit is ever revealing the Father. (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*)

Vers. 6–13. **For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken.**—*God is love:*—None of those who came before the Lord Jesus ventured to define God as love. But it does not follow, as we sometimes assume, that the holy men who were moved by the Holy Ghost before Christ came into the world did not know and teach the fatherly and redeeming love of God. They could not be so familiar with that love as we are; but that they recognized it, and insisted on it with rare force and pathos, that they did all that mere words could do to convince and persuade men of it, no candid student of the Old Testament will deny, although when they were most profoundly moved by it we can still detect in their language a certain accent of almost incredulous surprise. Isaiah, for example, as he utters these pathetic phrases of my text, can hardly believe for joy and wonder. Again and again he is compelled to remind himself that it is God who is speaking in him and through him. The tender phrases which, were they not so tender, might run on with even flow, are again and again broken with such words as "saith thy God," or "saith the Lord thy Redeemer," or "saith the Lord that hath compassion on thee." Do you wonder that Isaiah, who knew God so well, found it hard to believe in a love so tender and true, and so feared that his hearers would find it quite impossible to believe? Ah, but consider who and what they were on whom he was told that God had set His heart, and all the treasures of His love and compassion! God had lavished on them every possible means of grace, insomuch that He both could, and did, appeal to them whether there was even one single thing He could have done for him which He had not done. Yet, despite His singular and boundless grace, they had sunk to the level, and below the level, of the heathen around them. Was it likely that God should love them? Consider, too, how stern and dreadful was the burden which Isaiah had been commissioned to denounce upon them. And God had been as good as His word. Assyrian and Chaldean armies had swept the land of its inhabitants; their cities were burned with fire, and the once fertile and wealthy land turned into a desert. All who were left of the people were carried away captive, and left to weep for seventy years over their unstrung harps as they sat by the waters of Babylon. It was to these sinful, miserable captives and exiles that the prophet was moved to proclaim the tender and inalienable love of God! The words authenticate themselves. None but God could have spoken them. No man would have dared to conceive of God—no man, untaught of Heaven, ever has conceived of God, as yearning with love for the human race; and still less could any man have invented the tender, melting, beseeching phrases in which Isaiah has clothed that conception. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The wonderful love of God:*—Mark what the words do convey. God is speaking to men who had persistently sinned against all the influences of His love and grace, to men who were being consumed by the inevitable results of their transgressions. And He tells these poor miserable creatures that they are as dear to Him as the bride to her husband; that, though their offences against Him have been so many and so deep, He cannot tear His love for them out of His heart. Nay, as if this were not enough, He goes on to say that, though the blame is none of His, He is willing to take all the blame of their offences on Himself. Instead of reproaching them for their sins against His love, He compares them to a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, to a young and tender bride whose husband has despised and disgraced her, refusing to live with her and sending her away from his tent. It is He who has abandoned her, not she who has abandoned Him. It is He who has been hard and stern, not she who has been wilful and gone astray. But He never meant to be hard and stern. It was only for a brief moment that He left her, and

in a momentary flush of anger. If she will return to Him, and give Him another chance, He will welcome her with "great mercies" and comfort her with an "everlasting kindness." How shall He persuade her to return, to trust in Him? how convince her that He will be angry with her no more? He calls heaven and earth to witness to His truth, His fidelity, His deathless and unchanging love. He can appeal to His covenant with her, with Israel. She may think that that has been broken both by Him and by herself. But there was one of His covenants that had never been broken, an unconditional covenant, the covenant with Noah, which did not depend on men and their obedience, which depended only on God and on His faithfulness to His word. Henceforth His covenant with her shall be as the "waters of Noah;" He will no more fail in His love to her than He will suffer the earth to be wasted by another flood. He will never forsake her, even though she should forsake Him; never be wroth with her, nor rebuke her, even though she should still be wilful and provoke Him to anger. Nay, more; as if even this great promise were not enough, He casts about for another and a still more reassuring figure, and goes on to say: The mountains were planted and the hills stood firm before the Deluge swept over the earth; even the waters of Noah could not wash them away, nor as much as make them quake. And His love shall henceforth be firm and unchanging as the mountains and hills; nay, more firm and unchanging. The mountains may remove and the hills may quake; but His lovingkindness shall never remove, His covenant of peace shall never quake. Even all this, wonderful and incredible as it is, is not enough. There is the sigh of an infinite compassion and truth in the exclamation, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, not comforted!" There is an unbounded and Divine generosity in the promise to the bride, to the woman, that, if she will only come back to Him, her very palace shall be built of rare gems; and in the promise to the mother, than which no promise could be more dear to a mother's heart, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Is that a fable of man's invention? Can it be? Would any man have dared to give it as a statement of the facts, or possible facts of human life? (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 7–10. **For a small moment have I forsaken thee.**—*Affliction and consolation:*—This is a word of blessed comfort from One who is able to give it. Here is—I. TEMPORARY AFFLICTION. Observe—1. Its Author. "I have forsaken." All trial comes from the hand of God Himself. Means may be employed, but He works through and by the means. 2. Its method. "Forsaken." The greatest sorrow of Christ was that He was forsaken of God. The terror of hell will be that it is a God-forsaken world. 3. Its duration. "A small moment." It is nothing in comparison to time, less than nothing in the face of eternity. Affliction may endure for a moment. II. PERMANENT CONSOLATION. Here is—1. The joy of reunion. How blessed the meeting of friends, separated, it may be, by a quarrel or a sin. 2. The joy of forgiveness. "With great mercies," etc. The past will be overlooked, the future guaranteed. All this will be undertaken by God. As He sends the trials so He sends the mercies. (*Homilist.*) *The believer for a small moment forsaken, but with great mercies gathered:*—I. What is the view here given us of GOD'S MANIFESTED DISPLEASURE towards the individual mentioned in the text? "For a small moment have I forsaken thee." God's forsaking His people cannot be at all in sovereignty, but must always be in justice; the very next verse tells us, in fact, that it was "in wrath"—that it was on account of sin. As to the manifestation of displeasure, God speaks here of His "forsaking" us. 1. He is sometimes said to forsake His people, when He leaves them under temporal affliction. This was very frequently the meaning of such words in reference to God's ancient people, the Jews. 2. Sometimes this phrase is used, we apprehend, when there seems to be an obstruction of access to the Throne of Grace—when our approach to it seems barred and obstructed. 3. Sometimes the phrase is used in reference to the spiritual declension of God's people. II. THE GENTLENESS AND LIGHTNESS OF HIS MANIFESTED DISPLEASURE are likewise referred to: "For a small moment." Now, putting these two words together—"small moment"—and connecting likewise, this verse with the succeeding verse, we may understand that both the degree and the duration of the punishment are referred to in the text. "For a small moment"—a moment of smallness, or of lightness; and again, "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment." This will appear to us more particularly, if we place in comparison with those afflictions to which we have referred certain other circumstances. 1. For instance, only compare the afflictions which

you have endured with your deserts. 2. Then compare your sufferings with your mercies. 3. Compare your sufferings with those of others. 4. Compare your sufferings with those of Jesus. 5. Think of your present sufferings compared with everlasting torment. III. Let us turn to the declaration of God respecting the mercy which He has in reserve for his people—HIS GRACIOUS DESIGN TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE. "With great mercies will I gather thee." This gathering, as it has reference to the Church of God, will be seen to have several meanings. 1. As to individuals, it may very fairly express the design of God to gather to Himself those that are far from Him by wicked works. 2. Then, "I will gather" you to the possession and enjoyment of all the privileges of My people—this, of course, must be included—to the fellowship of the saints. 3. Perhaps this may be very fairly applied to God's gathering His saints to Himself by death. 4. There will be the final gathering, the universal gathering at His second coming. IV. "WITH GREAT MERCIES," He says, "will I gather thee." God, then, is telling His people what are His intentions, and is showing them what are His dispositions to them, in association with these great designs. Let us apply the phrase—1. To the originating mercy. 2. To the procuring cause. 3. To the efficient cause—the operation of the Spirit. 4. To the providential course of means which God employs. 5. To the nature of the blessings which God has vouchsafed to you, and which He will vouchsafe to you. (*J. Griffin.*) *The beneficence of apparent alienation:*—Sometimes it is needful to be forsaken for the moment that we may be properly gathered. We have seen some loving one teaching a child to walk; the arms were taken away from the child, but not far. The child could never be taught to walk if the arms were round about it; it must be left for a little moment, but the protection must be always near. Alienation does not always mean penalty, it sometimes means education. Alienation may mean penalty, and then the arms are in very deed a long way off—indeed, they may be lifted up to smite the transgressor, the wanderer whose heart has gone astray, having loved lies and darkness rather than truth. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual depression may have physical causes:*—A good many supposed alienations are merely the result of physical causes. If our physical nature were better understood our spiritual depressions would be a great deal less thought of. Many a man suffers from melancholy who supposes that God has forsaken him, simply because he has inherited a constitution that has been vitiated, or because he has tampered with the laws and ordinances of nature, or because he is undergoing a process which may be absolutely necessary for his purification and strengthening. Do not suppose that God is moved by moods and whims as we are, that he favours a child to-day, and rebukes the child to-morrow, without any reason or sense of justice. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 8. **In a little wrath I hid My face from thee.**—*God's face hidden:*—To say God hath cast me off because He hath hid His face is a fallacy fetched out of the devil's topics. When the sun is eclipsed, foolish people may think it will never recover light, but wise men know it will. During the eclipse, though the earth wanteth the light of the sun for a time, yet not the influence thereof. (*J. Trapp.*) *God's little wrath and God's great wrath:*—This precious passage is the property of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might not have ventured to say this if it were not for the last verse of the chapter, which assures us that it is so. "This is the heritage." I. What the Lord calls His "LITTLE WRATH." Let us speak of it and its modifications. 1. Our view of that wrath, and God's view of it may very greatly differ. To a child of God in a right state even the most modified form of Divine anger is very painful. This pain of heart is a very proper feeling, but it may be perverted by unbelief into the occasion of sin. We may conclude from the chastening rod that the Lord is about to destroy us, though he has plainly said, "Fury is not in Me." This dark estimate of our affairs is not God's view of them. It is but a partial departure under which the saint is suffering; the small moment will soon be over. I will now call your attention to two or three things which should greatly modify the view we take of the hidings of God's face. (1) As to time; the time during which our God withdraws Himself is very short: "for a moment," He says; but He puts it less than that, "For a small moment." Think of how long He has loved us, even from before the foundation of the world! The time in which He hides His face is very short compared with that. Think of how long He will love us: when all this universe shall have subsided into its native nothingness, He will love us for ever! The time during which He chastens us is, compared with that, a very small moment. Think of how long we deserved to have been in hell, to lie for ever beneath His indignation: the little moment in which

His heavy hand is upon us is indeed as nothing compared with the eternal misery which our sins have merited. When you come forth from the hiding of His face into the light again, this gloom will seem to have been but a small moment. (2) The recompense which is promised. "With great mercies will I gather thee." The Lord will make up to you all your losses, your crosses, and your chastisements. God's dealings with us never seem to be so merciful as after a time of trial. The bitterness makes the sweet the sweeter, and the sorrow makes the joy more abounding. The text does not say that God will give us mercy after He has for awhile left us; the word is in the plural, "mercies," multitudes of mercies. Nay, it does not merely say "mercies," but "great mercies," for they are all the greater because we so greatly need them, are plunged in such great distress for want of them, and filled with so many great fears as to our future estate. The Lord not only promises us these great favours, but promises that He Himself will bring them. They are not to be sent to us by angels or by external providences. "With great mercies will I gather thee." (3) The wrath is in itself little. 2. The expression of His little anger is not after all so extremely severe, for what does it say? "I hid My face." The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth, but our text does not say, "I turned My face against thee," but only, "I hid My face from thee." This is painful, but still there is this sweet reflection—why does He hide His face? It is because the sight of it would be pleasant to us. It is a face of love; for if it were a face of anger He would not need to hide it from His erring child. If it were an angry face, and He wished to chasten us, He would unveil it; therefore, we may be sure that He covers it because it is so bright with everlasting love that if it could be seen no chastisement would be felt by us. 3. Observe, too, for we must not leave out a word here, that this little wrath is perfectly consistent with everlasting love. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The Lord is filled with everlasting kindness at the very time when He is making the promise, for if you promise a person that you will love him you do love him already; love alone could prompt a promise such as that which I have read. You have no right to infer from the greatness of your griefs that God is ceasing to love you, or that He loves you less. II. THE GREAT WRATH OF GOD AND OUR SECURITY AGAINST IT. Our security against it is this: "This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn," etc. Until God drowns the whole world again, He can never let out His great wrath against His people. 1. My text suggests that we have ample security that the wrath of God will never break out against us, for it has broken out against us once. The waters of Noah did go over the earth once, but never twice. Now, the wrath of God can never break forth against His redeemed, because it has already broken forth against them. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Is not that answer enough for all the charges of hell? 2. The text gives us next the oath of God as our security. "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth," etc. It is always a solemn occasion when Jehovah lifts His hand to heaven and swears. Then is a matter confirmed indeed when it is secured by the oath of God. 3. Next, we have before us the fact that the Lord has guaranteed our security by a covenant. "Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." 4. What blessed illustrations of our security are added in the further declaration of the Lord's mind and will. The Lord looks on the mountains and the hills, and declares that these and all things visible will pass away, for time's grandest birth shall perish when eternity resumes its sway. The mountains and the hills may represent the most stable of earthly hopes and confidences: these all must fail us when most we need them. The Lord Himself assures us of this, and therefore does not at all guarantee to us any security in the things which are seen, nor any peace that can be drawn from the creature; our consolation lies elsewhere. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith Jehovah, the Pitier." Under no conceivable circumstances shall the covenant fail; the Lord who made it cannot change, Jesus who sealed it cannot die, the love which dictated it cannot cease, the power which executes it cannot decay, and the truth which guarantees it cannot be questioned. As for you who have no portion in Divine realities, what do you possess that is worth having? (*C. H. Spurgeon*).

Ver. 9. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me.—*The Lord no more wroth*

with His people:—I. WHAT MEN HAVE MOST TO FEAR. All men who are unsaved ought, with fear and trembling, to dread the wrath of God—the wrath present, and the wrath to come. The text speaks of the Lord's being wroth, as of an evil to be feared. Man has cause to be afraid of "the rebuke of God"—that stern rebuke of the Holy One which is the prelude to the lifting-up of His unsheathed sword, and the destruction of His adversaries. 1. God's wrath is matter for fear, because to be in union with God is necessary to the happiness of the creature. 2. This wrath of God is to be feared all the more because there is no escaping from it. A man who is under the wrath of a monarch can escape to another kingdom; a man who has incurred the anger of the most mighty enemy can find, somewhere in this great world, a nook wherein he can conceal himself from his relentless pursuer. But he that has exposed himself to the wrath of God cannot save himself from the Almighty hand. 3. There is this also to be dreaded in the wrath of God, that there is no cure for it. Nothing can possibly give a man ease or safety when the rebuke of God has gone forth against him. He may be surrounded with temporal comforts, but his riches will only mock his inner poverty. Friends may utter words of cheer, but miserable comforters shall they all be. Instead of the mercies of this life becoming any comfort to him, when a man has the wrath of God resting upon him, it is written, "I will curse all your blessings." 4. The rebuke of God, if we live and die impenitent, is one against which we cannot harden ourselves. We cannot gather strength to endure when God strikes at the heart and dries up the spirit. 5. Remember the overwhelming fact that the wrath of God does not end with death. II. WHAT THE SAINTS NEED NEVER FEAR. Dreadful as it is, and more than sufficient to overwhelm the spirit with dismay, a fear of the wrath of God need never disturb the believer's heart. God has sworn that He will never be wroth with His people. He does not say that He will never be so angry with their sins as to chasten them sharply; for anger with our sins is love to us. He does not say that He will not be so angry as to punish us; although there would be great mercy even in that; but He goes much further, and says that He will never be so wroth with His people as even to rebuke them. "What!" say you, "then doth not God rebuke His people?" Ah, verily, that He doth, and chasten them too! but those rebukes and those chastisements are in love, and not in wrath. The text before us is to be read thus: "I will not be wroth with thee so as to rebuke thee in indignation." There shall never be so much as a word of wrath from the lips of God, touching any one of His servants whose righteousness is of Him. 1. This, to make us sure of it, is first of all confirmed by an oath. We ought to believe God's bare word: we are bound to accept His promise as certainty itself; but who will dare to doubt the oath of the Eternal? 2. As if further to illustrate the certainty of this, He is pleased to draw a parallel between His present covenant oath and that which He made in the days of Noah with the second great father of the human race. (1) The covenant made with Noah was a covenant of pure grace. This covenant is paralleled by the covenant in your case. (2) The first covenant with Noah was made after a sacrifice. The same reason so works with God that He will not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you. (3) That covenant which God made with Noah was openly propounded in the ears of the whole race. Noah and his sons heard it, and we have all heard it. Now, when a man makes a promise, if it is in private he is bound by it, and his honour is engaged thereto; but when his solemn promise becomes public, he stakes his character among men upon the fulfilment of his word. Now, since the Lord has made public this gracious word—"I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee," does He not intend to do as He has said? (4) God never has broken the covenant which He made with Noah. If the Lord be so faithful to one covenant, why should we imagine, even in our worst moments, that He will be unfaithful to His other word which He has spoken concerning our souls? 3. If this be the case, that God will not be wroth with us, nor rebuke us, then the greatest fear that can ever fall upon us is gone, and it is time that all our lesser fears were gone with it. For instance, there is (1) the fear of man. When we clearly understand that God is not wroth with us, we feel raised above the rage of mortals. (2) So, too, we need not fear the devil. If God will not be wroth with me, nor rebuke me, why should I fear though all hell's legions should march against me? (3) If God will never be wroth with us, nor rebuke us, we need not fear any of the chastisements which He may lay upon us. There is a vast difference between a blow that is given in anger and a pat that is given in love. (4) How this alters the look of death. If death be a punishment to a believer, then death wears gloomy colours; but if death itself has changed its character, how delightful is this! (5) After death shall come the

judgment, and in that last great day the Lord will not be wroth with His people; if the reading out of all His people's sins before an assembled world must imply a rebuke, then it shall not be done, for He will not rebuke them. So then, what should we fear? What indeed? The Lord grant us to be afraid of being afraid! Conclusion: If it be so, that God has sworn that He will not be wroth with us, then—(1) Believe it. (2) Rejoice. (3) Be resigned. (4) Impart. If you have learned this love in your own heart, then tell it out to others. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. For the mountains shall depart.—*Mountains stable, yet crumbling:*—Those who have been reared and nurtured among the everlasting hills always look upon them as old friends. To them there is in mountain, valley and glen a peace reposing in the bosom of strength that soothes the heart to rest. Jean Paul says "that the great hills are like great men—the first to catch and the last to lose the light;" and he might further say that, like great men, they afford kindliest shelter in their mighty bosoms to the weary and heart-sore. While the idea of stability is connected with the everlasting hills, science, with stern truthfulness, affirms that they are gradually crumbling away. They say that the Alleghanies, in their prime, were three thousand feet higher than human eyes have ever seen them. There was a time when the igneous forces possessed the advantage, and island and continent and alp rose triumphant over the sea. But for thousands of years the energies of fire have been wasting, and earthquake and fire have been smitten with the palsy of age. River and stream are filching soil from mountain and plain and restoring it again to the sea. Defiant granite, which baffled the lightnings that rent Sinai, and frowned upon the flood that drowned the world, shall yet be brought down by the continuous pelting of rain and the insidious sapping of frost. (*A. Macfarlane.*) *The unchangeable duration of God's kindness and covenant:*—I. THE CHANGEABLE STATE AND FRAME OF THIS WORLD, which shall issue in its final dissolution. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." In opposition hereunto we have—II. THE UNCHANGEABLE DURATION OF GOD'S KINDNESS TO, AND COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE. "But My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenants of My peace be removed." III. THE CONFIRMATION AND REASON OF THIS, as contained in the words, "saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." (*J. Guyse, D.D.*) *The enduring in the universe:*—I. THE GOOD MAN'S EXISTENCE IS MORE DURABLE THAN THE MOUNTAINS. This is here implied. The people here addressed are supposed to live after the mountains have departed. The fact that a man is more durable than the mountains gives consistency to our life—and grandeur. II. GOD'S KINDNESS IS MORE DURABLE THAN THE MOUNTAINS. "My kindness shall not depart from thee." God's kindness is more durable even than man. Though man will never have an end, he had a beginning. God's kindness never had a beginning, and will never have an end. Kindness is the very essence of the Eternal, the root of all existence, the primal font of all blessedness in all worlds. 1. His kindness will continue notwithstanding the sins of humanity. 2. His kindness continues notwithstanding the sufferings of humanity. In fact, His kindness is expressed in human suffering. Does not the loving father often show more love to his child in correcting him for his offences than in gratifying his desires? There is kindness in the jndgments that befall men. The most terrible judgments are but God's mercy weeding the world of its evils. III. THE UNION BETWEEN BOTH WILL BE MORE DURABLE THAN THE MOUNTAINS. "My kindness shall not depart from thee." These words were addressed to His own people, and not to men in general; and the idea is, that His kindness will continue for ever in connection with the truly good. God's kindness is indissolubly associated with the good. St. Paul challenges the universe to effect a separation. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Fears and their antidote:*—When God called the Jewish captives to go forth to their own land, they began to be full of fears about the future. They mused over possible or imaginary difficulties. They groaned under prospective burdens. How should they get across the wilderness? From whence should they receive their supplies? Who would protect them from the roving bands of robbers? And even if they should really live through all the perils of the wilderness, and get safe again into Palestine, how would they find the country? Would it be desolate and waste, or cultivated and attractive? Would it be free from enemies, or full of foes? Who was then to be their shield and buckler, their strong tower, their rock of defence to save them? It was this temper of mind which the prophet was commissioned by Jehovah to remove. Why, said the fervid son of Amos, are you so fearful? Think of God's momentary anger, and eternal mercy (vers. 7, 8). Think of the covenant which God made to the

preacher of righteousness (ver. 9). Think of the most stable and enduring things of which you know: not of fortresses—they can be demolished, and not one stone be left upon another that is not thrown down; nor yet of temples, though they rear their heads and smite the stars, like the temple of Belus in the city which has so long been your home. Think, not of those, but of the everlasting mountains. What so secure, so deep-rooted, so enduring? Yet, "the mountains shall depart," etc. (ver. 10). I. THE TEMPER OF THE JEWISH CAPTIVES IS ALSO THE TEMPER OF MANY GODLY MEN IN OUR DAY. The words of the prophet are words which they also need to hear, to be reassured and to recover their confidence and hope. 1. We have fears about matters purely secular. 2. There are fears which spring from matters as purely spiritual. 3. Fears also arise from temptations. These temptations are very many and very subtle. 4. There are foes to face, other foes than Satan, but who may be prompted by his evil counsels. What will be our condition in relation to them? There are foes in our own heart, foes in our own house, foes in our daily toil and our rest. Shall we be able to meet and overcome them? 5. Perhaps, with a very large number of devout and godly men, the greatest source of fear is the possibility of the coming on of an hour of darkness. 6. In numberless other instances, the fear originates through a morbid apprehension of death, a hatred of it that is far more Pagan than Christian, a shrinking back from the thought of dissolution, and all that dissolution carries with it. II. LET US NOW LOOK, NOT AT THE FEARS, BUT AT THEIR TRUE ANTIDOTE. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," etc. 1. Here is the declaration of the perpetual providence of God. 2. Another antidote to fear is given in the Divine pledge of peace. "The covenant of My peace shall not be broken." When the sacred writers speak of God's covenant, it is at once apparent that they are describing the things of heaven in the language of earth. But when the word is used as in the case before us, it stands for a Divine pledge or promise. Remember, still further, that "peace" was a word which, in the estimation of the Jew, carried with it every possible earthly advantage. It meant more than the cessation of hostility. It meant, opportunity for business; success in commercial ventures; home-life, home-joys, to which the ancient Hebrew was so partial; quiet, love, happiness. The blessings which Jehovah promised to the Jews were manifold; but all those blessings were summed up in this one expressive word—peace. So also to us, in the later economy. God's pledge to us is—"peace," putting the still larger Christian meaning into that word. But when God promises that the covenant of His peace shall not be broken, He expects us to fulfil our part of the covenant. He gives no assurance of peace, if we swerve from Him. 3. The Divine assurance of mercy is another antidote to fear. "The Lord, who hath mercy on thee." Mercy was the basis of all God's treatment of the ancient Jews. Mercy is still the foundation of God's dealings with us. (*J. J. Goadby.*) *The unchangeableness of God's covenant the saint's security:*—I. AN ACCOUNT GIVEN OF A COVENANT, which is ascribed to God, and said to be a covenant of peace. II. THE SPRING AND SOURCE OF THIS COVENANT. "Kindness and mercy." III. A MOST SOLEMN ASSURANCE OF THE STABILITY, PERPETUITY, AND UNCHANGEABLENESS OF IT. "It shall not depart nor be removed." IV. THE AMPLIFICATION OR FARTHER ILLUSTRATION OF THIS SECURITY. "This is as the waters of Noah unto Me, and though the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed," etc. (*S. Wilson.*) **My kindness shall not depart from thee.**—*Kindness:*—There is something very suggestive in that word "kindness." Kindness is originally that which is felt and shown to one's kind or kin. Kind is "kinned;" so that, according to the primitive signification of the word, kindness grows out of natural relationship. And this is really the basis of God's kindness. Men are His children: and the relation of parent and child implies kindness. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The kindness of God:*—The word kindness as applied to Deity is a very comprehensive term. It embraces the attributes of love and mercy in all their manifestations and numerous relations, and may be understood to be one with pity, compassion, sympathy, and tenderness. I. The kindness of Deity is UNCHANGEABLE. It is contrasted with the mutability of earthly objects—even with the mightiest and the most endurable—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." II. The kindness of God is UNIVERSAL, while in some cases it is SPECIAL. III. The PERPETUITY of this kindness. "It shall not depart from thee." The kindness of Deity has its law. It may be granted, or it may be withdrawn, conditionally; and the law of kindness acts in union with the law of justice. (*W. D. Horwood.*) **The covenant of My peace.**—*God's peace-giving covenant:*—"The covenant of My peace" does not give the sense as fully as "My covenant of peace;" *i. e.* My peace-giving covenant. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The blessings and stability of the*

covenant of grace:—I. A VIEW OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED IN MAKING THIS COVENANT. II. A VIEW OF THE BLESSINGS CONTAINED IN IT. III. A VIEW OF THE STABILITY AND CERTAINTY OF THIS COVENANT, WITH ALL ITS BLESSINGS AND BENEFITS, TO EVERY TRUE BELIEVER. (*J. Kidd, D.D.*) *The covenant of God's peace:*—1. It proceeds from Him as the God of peace. 2. In this way He hath formed between Himself and His people the most intimate, endearing connection, ratified by the Mediator, who is our peace. 3. All the blessings requisite to their peace and felicity are therein bestowed. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Vers. 11–17. O thou afflicted.—*The city of God:*—The reference is still to Jerusalem. In the former paragraph, she was addressed as a barren wife; here as destined to arise from her encumbering ruins, and become the joy of the whole earth. Of course, the primary reference is to that actual rebuilding which took place under the direction of Nehemiah. But there is a further and more spiritual meaning. These words must refer to that city of God which is ever arising amid the ruins of all other structures. Watched by the ever-attentive eye of the great Architect, wrought by unseen hands, tested by the constant application of the line of truth and the plummet of righteousness, and emerging slowly from heaps of rubbish into strength and beauty. A description is given of the pricelessness of the structure, the privileges of the inhabitants, and the safety which is assured by the Word of God; and let us not hesitate to appropriate this blessed vision. It is put clearly within our reach by the assurance with which the chapter closes, that this is the heritage of all the servants of the Lord. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God's promise to the afflicted Church:*—I. THE LOW AND AFFLICTED STATE OF THE CHURCH. 1. She is deeply distressed; and the language of Divine compassion towards her is, "Oh thou afflicted!" Piety exempts from future wrath, but not from present trouble. Saints have their afflictions in common with others. 2. The Church of God is also described as being "tossed with tempests," like a ship driven from her anchors, carried to and fro by the boisterous waves, and ready every moment to be swallowed up. A storm at sea also well represents the terrors of an awakened conscience, and the agonies of a mind in deep distress; when awful providences are joined with inward darkness, so that one trouble excites and sharpens another. 3. The Church is afflicted, "and not comforted." Sometimes light arises out of darkness, and God comforts His people in all their tribulations: but here every species of relief is withheld. II. THE COMPASSION OF GOD TOWARDS HIS AFFLICTED PEOPLE, AND THE PROMISE MADE FOR THEIR RELIEF. "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours," etc. This is as if the Lord had said, I will turn thy sorrow into joy, thy tears into triumphs. 1. The Church is here represented as a building, whether as a common dwelling or a temple is immaterial. The materials are various. Some are placed in a more conspicuous situation than others; but all are useful and necessary, in different degrees. The various parts of the edifice require to be united, in order to form an entire structure; a confused heap of materials, scattered and unconnected, afford no idea of a building. A temple is designed for worship, and a house for habitation; the Church of God is designed for both. 2. The several parts of this building are next described; the stones that are to be laid, and also the foundations. None but spiritual materials, none but living stones are fit to make a part of this building. The foundation of this building is Christ Jesus. All true believers are united to Him, and rest their eternal all upon Him, as a building rests upon its foundation. 3. We have a promise of future felicity, and glory to the Church. "I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires." These expressions may imply—(1) The Church's worth and excellency. (2) Its comeliness and beauty. (3) Its firmness and stability. The precious stones and the sapphires, with which this building is to be erected, are durable as well as beautiful, and expressive of the perpetuity of the Gospel Church. (4) Its future glory. The Church shall indeed be raised to a greater degree of glory in this world; but she shall be transcendently and eternally glorious in the world to come. The future glory of the Church, as predicted by the prophet, is similar to that of the New Jerusalem, which the apostle saw descending from God out of heaven. Let then the afflicted Church, and individual believers, bless God for such a promise! Let them exercise faith and patience, and wait its full accomplishment (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The city of God:*—I. THE PRICELESSNESS OF THE STRUCTURE. What an enumeration of precious stones! Let us consider what jewels are. A jewel is a bit of ordinary earth which has passed through an extraordinary experience. Then there is a special fitness in this address to the afflicted people of God. 1. Foundations of sapphire. Underneath our lives, underpinning the history of the world of

men, the one ultimate fact for us all is the love of God. They are stable. They are fair. 2. Windows of agates. Agates are varieties of quartz, and bear evidently in their texture the mark of fire. Indeed, they are always found in the igneous rocks, from which they drop out when such rocks decompose under the action of water and air. The agate is partially transparent; not opaque, as flint; not transparent, as rock-crystal—it admits light, tempering it as it passes. God makes windows of agates; He takes our sorrows and makes them windows through which we may gaze into the unseen. In sorrow we see the unsatisfying nature of the world, and the reality of the unseen; we learn to appreciate the tenderness and delicacy of human love; we have insight into the meaning of God's providences; we behold the value and truth of Scripture. 3. Gates of carbuncles. There is a good deal of uncertainty as to the precise stone indicated by the Hebrew word rendered "carbuncle." It seems better, therefore, to take the suggestion of the duplicate vision in the Apocalypse, and to think of gates of pearl. The pearl is said to result from the infliction of a wound in the oyster, which leads it to throw out the precious fluid that congeals into a pearl. If so, every pearl on the neck of beauty is the lasting memento of a stab of pain. At any rate, each pearl commemorates the hazard of human life in the diver's descent into the ocean depths. It is true of life; all our outgoings into wider ministry, nobler life, greater responsibility of blessedness, are due to the precious action of sorrow, self-sacrifice, and pain. There is no gate into the life, which is life indeed, which has not cost us dear. II. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHILDREN OF THE CITY. 1. They shall be all taught of God. It is a deep and helpful thought that God has opened a school in this dark world, and has Himself undertaken to act as Schoolmaster. It is the Father who teaches. "He knows our frame," etc. To be taught of God is to be led by His own hand into a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of redemption. 2. "Great shall be the peace of thy children." We have first peace with God, through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ; then the peace of God, which here is called "great," and elsewhere "that passeth understanding." Some parts of the ocean laugh the sounding-line to scorn. You may let out 1,000, 2,000, even 6,000 fathoms, and still the plumb falls clear. So it is when God's peace, driven from all the world, comes to fold its wings of rest in the heart. It is better than joy, which falters and fluctuates; better than the ecstacy which may have its reactions. And these two rest on each other. The more you know God, the more peace you have; because you find Him more worthy of your trust. III. THEIR SAFETY. The waster fulfils a useful function: the knife that cuts away the dead wood; the fire that eats out the alloy; the winnowing fan that rids the wheat of the chaff; the east wind tearing through the forest; the frost crumbling up the soil; the vast army of animals that devour and destroy. "I have created the waster to destroy." This is the strong Hebrew way of saying that God permits, and overrules, and brings out good by means of the evil that had seemed destructive of all good. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Zion's foundations, windows, gates, and borders:*—I. THE STATE, CHARACTER, AND CONDITION OF THE SUFFERING CHURCH OF GOD. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted." Every one of these expressions is pregnant with heavenly meaning. 1. "O thou afflicted." Affliction is one of the marks that God stamps upon His people. 2. "Tossed with tempest." Some are tossed with a tempest of doubts and fears; others with a tempest of lusts and corruptions; others with a tempest of rebellion and fretfulness; others with a storm of guilt and despondency; others with gloomy forebodings and dismal apprehensions. Thus are they driven from their course, their sun and stars all obscured; no clear evidences, no bright manifestations; darkness above and a raging sea beneath; breakers ahead, and no harbour in sight. 3. But the Lord adds another word, "not comforted"—that is, not comforted by, not capable of comfort from, man. This I look upon as a very decisive mark of a work of grace upon the soul. God has received the Church's comfort in His own hands; from His lips alone can consolation be spoken into her soul. II. THE BLESSED CLUSTER OF GOSPEL PROMISES THAT GOD MAKES TO HIS SUFFERING CHURCH. "Behold," He says, as though He would draw her special attention to the work that He was about to perform. "I will lay thy stones with fair colours." The Lord here seems to take the figure of a building; or rather of a temple, for His people are compared to a temple. His work upon their soul He compares to the work of an architect, or a builder who lays stone upon stone until he puts on the top-stone with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it. 1. The first promise that He makes relative to this building of mercy is—"I will lay her stones with fair colours." This seems to be a general description of the work of God in rearing up the spiritual building before He

proceeds to nicer particulars. But what may we specially understand by these "stones" that the Lord promises to lay "with fair colours"? I think we may understand by these the blessed truths of the Gospel. These are laid into the soul by the hand of God. However fair or beautiful any word of God be in itself, it only experimentally becomes so as inlaid by His own Divine hand into the soul. This brings out the fair colouring. But in the words, "I will lay thy stones with fair colours," there seems to be a reference also to the cement in which the stones are laid, as well as to the stones themselves. What is this cement? Is it not blood and love? 2. But the Lord goes on to particularize His work. He speaks of her "foundations," her "windows," her "gates," and "borders," and He tells us how they are all severally framed and made. Beginning at the beginning, He describes the material and laying of her foundations—"I will lay thy foundations with sapphires." Before we can stand firmly in the things of God, we must have a good foundation, something solid for our faith, our hope, our love, our all to rest upon. But what is a sapphire? A precious stone, the distinguishing feature of which is its peculiar clear and beautiful colour—a heavenly blue. I would not press the figure too closely, but may it not fitly represent from its nature and colour a special gift from heaven? What a mercy for you if your faith has such a sapphire for its foundation; when you do not rest upon the bare letter of God's word, but upon the testimony of God laid into your soul. 3. But the Lord also adds—"and I will make thy windows of agates." What is a window for? Chiefly to admit light and air, and also to give us a prospect of the scenery without. But the windows are of "agate." Glass in those days was not used for windows; it was known for various other purposes; for it has been lately found in Nineveh, as well as in the tombs of Egypt; but its use for windows is of comparatively modern date. But why are they made of agate? Though not as clear as glass, it is what is called semi-transparent, that is, sufficiently transparent to admit a considerable amount of light. The sun shining through a window of agate might lose a portion of its brightness, but not much of its light. Upon Zion in her time-state the Sun of Righteousness does not shine in all his brightness. The windows of agate whilst she is in the flesh temper his rays. Her prospects, too, are not fully bright and clear. We have not those clear views which the saints have in glory where they see Jesus face to face. 4. But the Lord speaks also of Zion's "gates." These gates are to give admission to the temple which He is rearing for His own habitation. But of what material are the gates? These, too, like the foundations and windows, are of precious stones. "And thy gates of carbuncles." Now we must not be too fanciful in our interpretation of God's word; yet, doubtless, the Spirit of God chose these jewels with some peculiar meaning. The carbuncle is of a blood-red colour. And why should the Lord have chosen that Zion's gates should be of this peculiar colour? May we not believe that there is some mystic allusion here to the blood of the Lamb? But what are gates for? Entrance and exit. Zion has her gates of exit and entrance. She has her gates of access to God, entrance into the presence of the Most High. And who has opened the door, or rather who has not only opened it, and made it, but Himself is it? "I am the door," saith Jesus; and was not the door opened through His rent flesh? (Heb. x. 19, 20). But gates not only give admission but exit. Not only do prayers, supplications and tears, rise up with acceptance through the gates of carbuncle, and thus enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, but promises also, tokens, testimonies and visits come down. And as every prayer, to be a prayer, is breathed through the gate of carbuncle, through the blood of the Lamb, so every answer, that is an answer, comes down through the same consecrated channel. 5. But the Lord also speaks of Zion's borders. He tells us He will make "all her borders of pleasant stones." There shall be nothing common about her. No architect pays the same attention to the courts and outbuildings that he pays to the mansion itself. If the mansion be of stone these may be of brick. Not so with God, Zion's Divine Architect. Zion's very borders, courts, outbuildings, are all of the same material with the mansion itself. Thus God's providential dealings, which often form the outward setting of His inward mercies, are of pleasant stones. But for whom are these mercies? The meritorious? the diligent? the industrious? We read not so. "O thou afflicted," etc. What! are all these mercies for such as they? They are the only persons who will prize them, or glorify God for them. (*J. C. Philpot.*) **Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours.**—*The decorations of Nature:*—Nature's temple is not a hueless, monotonous structure like the pyramids of Egypt. It is richly decorated. It is overlaid with chaste and beautiful ornamentation. Every stone is painted with fair colours, accurately toned, and in

perfect keeping. Not a rock that peers above the surface of the earth but is clothed with the rainbow tints of moss and lichen, and wreathed with the graceful tenderness of fern and wild-flower. Every mountain is clothed with the variegated verdure of forest and pasture, blending gradually upwards into the sober grey of crag, and the silvery whiteness of snow, and the quiet blue of the cloud-flecked sky. And when the living hues of plants are absent, there is compensation in the rich colours of the rocks, or in the bright reflections of the heavens. The brilliant crimson of Sinai's granite and sandstone cliffs makes up for their naked sterility; and if the mountain ranges of northern Europe are destitute of the emerald verdure of the Alps, they are covered instead with purple light as with a robe, and gather out of the sky at sunrise and twilight hues softer than the plumage of a dove, and more radiant than the petals of rose and violet. Even works of human art are decorated by nature with a picturesque glory of colour and light, in harmony with her own landscapes. The castle or the abbey, left untenanted, falls into ruin; but Nature—whose profound peace succeeds all strife of man, and whose passive permanency mocks his fast-perishing creeds—steps in to claim her reversion; and wherever her soft finger touches, there new beauties spring up and shame the artist's proudest triumphs. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *The adornments of grace*:—As Nature deals with the materials of her framework, so the Divine Artificer deals with the living materials of His spiritual temple. Every stone that is fit to be built into the walls of His holy habitation is richly sculptured and decorated. He leaves none in the meanness and vileness of their natural state. He digs them out of the fearful pit and the miry clay that they may be chiselled and polished, so as to be ornaments of the structure in which they stand. He makes the Sun of righteousness to shine upon the dark vapour-cloud of their nature, and thus paints it with the rainbow hues of grace. Black in themselves, He makes them comely in the reflected light of His love. From the moment that the favour of God is restored to them, they are wakened to a new existence and a better principle. (*Ibid.*) *Stones with fair colours*:—I. WHAT ARE THE FAIR COLOURS WITH WHICH THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS ADORNED? 1. Humility is one of the most conspicuous of them. It is the soft purple hue of the lowly violet, hid among its leaves, and known only by its fragrance; of the fruit when it is ripest; of the hills when most saturated with sunset light, and most like Heaven. It is the ornament which, in the sight of God, is of great price; it is the secret of true refinement and distinction in the eyes of men; it is the glory of the inner man renewed in sanctified self-denial and self-forgetfulness. By nothing is the genuine believer distinguished from the mere formalist and hypocrite more than by his humility. 2. Patience. It is the tender green of the grass, which, through summer's heat and winter's frost, remains unchanged, which may be trampled under foot and injured in every way, and yet retains its vitality unimpaired. 3. Benevolence. It is the quiet blue of the sky, which shines upon the just and the unjust, which sends down rain and dew upon the evil and the good. This is the virtue which counteracts the natural selfishness of the heart, and takes us out of ourselves. It is by the uniform and enlarged exercise of it that the disciples of the Lord are distinguished from the people of the world, who are ever intent only upon their own interests and pleasures. It is by their benevolence that they are assimilated to the Universal Giver, whose tender mercies are over all His works, and are never exhausted—to the compassionate Saviour, who though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich, and whose meat and drink on earth was to go about continually doing good—to the holy angels, whose happiness is increased by seeing sinners repenting on earth, and by being sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. 4. Zeal. It is the ruby hue of the blood which circulates through the veins, and animates the whole body with life and vigour. It is the crimson heat which energizes or melts everything before it, and pervades all with its own glow. It stimulates to the performance of every duty, infuses life into every experience, fervour into all devotion, spirit into all work, and overcomes difficulty as fire overcomes every resisting object. 5. Moderation or temperance. It is the golden mean between two extremes—the safe though narrow path between opposite evils that come very close to each other. It is the soul's centre of gravity. 6. All these and other graces are summed up in charity. As every lovely hue is light, so every lovely grace is love. This is the rainbow which gathers up and harmonizes all other qualities, and bends its Divine beauty over the whole life of the Christian. It is the genus of which all the Christian virtues are the species. Patience is the attitude of love, zeal is the energy of love, humility is the aspect of love, benevolence is the acting of love. II. WHAT ARE

THE PROPERTIES OF THESE FAIR COLOURS? 1. They should be harmonious. They should be developed proportionally, so that each, instead of detracting from, may add lustre to the other. Though the graces are possessed by the believer in various degrees of perfection, yet in every person some one or other is predominant, becomes so conspicuous as to colour the rest, and give the whole character its prevailing hue. The New Jerusalem above will be a glorious city, because there shall be gathered together, in varied but harmonious splendour, the brightness of the diamond, the ruddy flame of the topaz, the deep green of the emerald, the shining gold of the jasper, the milk-white filminess of the onyx, the heavenly blue of the sapphire, the lovely violet of the amethyst, the burning changes of the opal, and the soft beauty of the pearl! 2. The fair colours with which God lays the stones of His spiritual temple are not superficial. There is no plating, or enamelling, or veneering. Grace works from within outwards, renews the heart, and thus transforms the life. III. HOW ARE THESE FAIR COLOURS PRODUCED? God is their author. It is He who says, "I will lay thy stones with fair colours." They are not the spontaneous products of our own corrupt nature, nor even the forced growths of our own careful cultivation. The beauties of holiness are no mere fancy-sketch, no original picture. They are a copy of the Great Master. (*Ibid.*) *The co-operation of providence and grace:*—The work of the Spirit is aided by God's providential dealings without. It is to the "afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted," that God says, "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours." I have seen a literal fulfilment of these words in Nature. It is a remarkable circumstance that the most brilliant colours of plants are to be seen on the highest mountains, in spots that are most exposed to the wildest weather. The brightest lichens and mosses, the loveliest gems of wild-flowers, abound far up on the bleak storm-scalped peak. One of the richest displays of organic colouring I have ever beheld was near the summit of Mont Chenelettaz, a hill about 10,000 feet high, immediately above the great St. Bernard Hospice. The whole face of an extensive rock was covered with a most vivid yellow lichen, which shone in the sunshine like the golden battlement of an enchanted castle. There, in that lofty region, amid the most frowning desolation, exposed to the fiercest tempests of the sky, this lichen exhibited a glory of colour such as it never shows in the sheltered valley. I have two specimens of the same lichen before me, one from the great St. Bernard, and the other from the wall of a Scottish castle deeply embosomed among sycamore trees; and the difference in point of form and colouring between them is most striking. The specimen nurtured amid the wild storms of the mountain-peak is of a lovely primrose hue, and is smooth in texture and complete in outline; while the specimen nurtured amid the soft airs and the delicate showers of the lowland valley is of a dim rusty hue, and is scurfy in texture and broken in outline. And is it not so with the Christian who is afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted? Till the storms and vicissitudes of God's providence beat upon him again and again, his character appears marred and clouded by selfish and worldly influences. But trials clear away the obscurity, perfect the outlines of his disposition, and give brightness and beauty to his piety. (*Ibid.*) *The world unfavourable to beauty of Christian character:*—But though the trials of life are well fitted to bring out the fair colours of the Christian character, there is a sense in which the world may be said to be unfavourable to them. Its climate is not like the glowing air and the clear sunny sky of Egypt or Italy, which embalm architectural remains in imperishable beauty, and present the temples erected ages ago as sharply-defined in their sculpture, and as fresh and undimmed in their colouring as if built only yesterday. It is like our own misty climate. It is difficult to preserve the beauty of holiness in a world lying in wickedness, to keep the garments unspotted from the flesh. The fair colours of grace require to be constantly renewed, polished, brightened. But as Christians, another Will than your own has begun to work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And your holiness will surely spread in spite of every opposition over your whole nature and life, transforming you in the renewing of your mind, preserving you from the pollutions of the world, and preparing you for being presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (*Ibid.*) *The beautifying power of Divine grace:*—These fair colours of grace are within reach of all. In nature there is hardly a stone that is not capable of crystallizing into something purer and brighter than its normal state. Coal, by a slightly different arrangement of its particles, is capable of becoming the radiant diamond. The slag cast out from the furnace as useless waste, forms into globular masses of radiating crystals. From tar and pitch the loveliest colours are now manufactured. The very mud on the road, trampled under foot as the type of all

impurity, can be changed by chemical art into metals and gems of surpassing beauty. And so the most unpromising materials, from the most worthless moral rubbish that men cast out and despise, may be converted by the Divine alchemy into the gold of the sanctuary, and made jewels fit for the mediatorial crown of the Redeemer. (*Ibid.*) "*Fair colours:*"—Antimony was the costly black mineral powder with which the Eastern women painted their eyelids to throw up the lustre of their eyes. The dark cement in which the gems of the walls, gates, battlements, and even the foundations of the City were to be set, and which was to enhance their brilliance, was to be composed of this costly pigment. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) **And lay thy foundations with sapphires.**—*Foundations of sapphires:*—By the sea-shore we find samples of many of the rocks which form the crust of the earth. The commonest specimen among them has something to commend it either in colour or in form. It is assuredly not of worthless and unsightly materials that the hidden parts of the earth are constructed. Unlike man's work, which is carefully elaborated only where the eye is intended to see it, God's work is the same throughout. Not only is beauty lavished upon the superstructure—upon the grass, and the flowers, and the trees, that are to meet the gaze—but the very foundations are composed of onyx stones and stones to be set, glistering stones and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. A similar principle appears throughout the spiritual creation, of which the scheme of nature is only the visible picture. In the moral works of God as well as in the natural, beauty is combined with utility—grace with strength. He lays the foundations of the general Christian Church, and of the individual Christian character, with sapphires. Those hidden principles and motives upon which the grand superstructure of faith and charity is built, are not only strong and steadfast, but beautiful. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *The sapphire* is one of the brightest and most valuable of those mysterious unfading flowers of the inner earth which we call jewels. Born of darkness, stranger to the light, it yet holds in its core of focussed rays the blue of heaven. Gentians, violets, forget-me-nots, calm lakes and summer skies, glacier-depths and living springs, have their passing and perishing loveliness enshrined and concentrated in its heart of rock. There is one variety, of a singularly soft pure azure, which has the power of retaining its lovely memory of heaven, even by candlelight, when an ordinary sapphire looks black. It is sometimes found in masses of considerable size, and may therefore appropriately be spoken of in connection with foundations. It formed the pavement, like the body of heaven in its clearness, under the feet of the God of Israel, as seen by the elders in Exodus; and the throne of glory which appeared to Ezekiel in vision resembled a sapphire stone. It was the fifth precious stone in the breastplate of the Jewish high-priest, and had the name of Simeon engraved upon it; and the second foundation of the New Jerusalem is a sapphire. The minute account in Exodus and Revelation, of this and other jewels that adorned the sacerdotal apparel and the walls of the heavenly city, indicates the symbolic reverence attached to their use by the Jews. And this belief in their mystic qualities passed from India and Persia to Greece and Rome, and after playing a considerable part in the Gnostic systems of Alexandria, became finally transferred to the Christian Church, as we find Bishop Marbœuf of Rennes, in the eleventh century, versifying their talismanic influences in his curious "Lapidarium." Even St. Jerome praises the sapphire for its use in "conciliating to its wearer the favour of princes, quelling his enemies, dispersing sorceries, setting free the captive, and even assuaging the wrath of God himself." (*Ibid.*) *Blue* is an exceedingly lovely colour. It is quiet and subdued, attracting without dazzling the eye, suggestive of peace and repose. It is the most universally distributed of all hues. It forms the pleasing background of nature, on which the more brilliant colours of tree and flower and field come forth to arrest our attention, not only by their own beauty, but also by the force of contrast. We see it in the boundless expanse of the sky which bends over and idealizes our dull cold earth, and forms, with its varied changes, a part of the landscape, not the mere empty space that surrounds it. We see it in the distant hills, that assume on the horizon the azure colour of the sky, from sympathy of beauty and peace. We see it in the far-stretching ocean that covers three-fourths of the surface of the globe; in the lake, the river, and the stream, the mirrors which reflect and spiritualize the changeable beauty of earth and heaven. We see it in the blue-bell that rings out the pensive requiem of nature's mutability on quiet autumn eves; and in the human eye, the most wonderful of God's works, which reflects the world without and the world within—which is at once useful as an organ of vision, and beautiful as a spiritual and expressive window

of the soul. And as in the temple of nature, from the viewless air to the ethereal lustre of childhood's innocent eye, the hue of the sapphire predominates, so in the tabernacle and temple of old it was pre-eminent, being always mentioned in connection with gold in the enumeration of the sacred furniture. As the gold was emblematic of the glory and majesty of God, so the blue combined with it, in the sacred appointments of the tabernacle, might be aptly employed to represent His love and grace. Such an interpretation would be in strict accordance with the symbolism of nearly all nations, among whom blue has always been associated with ideas of love. (*Ibid.*) *Sapphire foundations:*—We may therefore understand the sapphire foundations of the Christian life which God lays, to be, in general terms, the love of God in Christ; His general love in providence, and His particular and surpassing love in redemption. It is on this beautiful and serene background that all the great manifestations of grace given to mankind are displayed. The temple of Solomon was built on the rocky foundation of Mount Moriah, a place consecrated to the work of redemption, from the time when Abraham offered there the ram which the Lord had provided, instead of his son Isaac, and the destroying angel sheathed there, by the threshing-floor of Araunah, the sword of judgment, on account of David's sacrifice. And so the spiritual temple is also built upon the work of redemption as its sapphire foundation. What beautiful emblems of Christ's love are the two grandest objects of nature—sapphire sea and sapphire sky! The boundless extent of heaven's blue field cannot be measured even by the astronomer, so the length and breadth, and height and depth of the love of Christ surpass all knowledge. Or, to take the sea as the comparison, the sea touches the shore along one narrow line, and all the beauty and fertility of that shore are owing to its life-giving dews and rains; but it stretches away from the shore, beyond the horizon, into regions which man's eye has never seen, and the further it recedes, the deeper and the bluer its waters become. And so the love of Christ touches us along the whole line of our life, imparts all the beauty and fruitfulness to that life, but it stretches away from the point of contact into the unsearchable riches of Christ, the measureless fulness of the Godhead—that ocean of inconceivable, incommunicable love which no plummet can sound, or eye of angel or saint ever scan. The Hebrew word *sappir*, translated sapphire in our version, is derived from the same root as the words that signify a book, writing, or engraving; and according to the Talmud, the two tables of stone, on which the Law was written on Sinai, were formed of sapphires. Blessed be God, it is not on the sapphire foundations of the Law that we are now to build our trust. The obedience that can rest on these foundations must be perfect in every jot and tittle, and perpetual, without cessation or suspense, without question or doubt, from the beginning to the end of life. But such an obedience we cannot rear. Christ's finished work is now our sapphire foundation. (*Ibid.*) "*I will lay thy foundations with sapphires:*"—The structure of our faith is four-square, like that of the temple of old. The chief corner-stone which binds the whole together is the redemption-love of Christ; but connected with it as a foundation for the believer's stability and hope, is—1. The covenant of grace, embracing every blessing from the first moment of incipient peace in the soul to the consummation of that peace in heaven, extending in its administration to the most minute particulars, making ample provision for every evil that can possibly happen to us, and securing calmness in the prospect and in the hour of death. 2. The revealed truth of God is another sapphire foundation connected with the precious corner-stone. 3. The experience of the believer is yet another sapphire foundation. The objective revelation of the Gospel has been followed by the subjective operation of the Spirit. The outward teaching of inspiration has become an inward Divine illumination. The doctrine has become a living power whose strength has been tried and proved; the Divine announcement has passed into the form of a human experience; the creed is no mere formula of speech, no mystic incantation, but "corresponds with needs of his soul, which he has probed to the bottom in the hour of difficulty." In short, Christ proclaimed by Old Testament types and prophecies, revealed in the Gospels, preached in the Apostolic Acts and Epistles, has become Christ formed in the soul the hope of glory. The sapphire is one of the most precious jewels; ranking next to the diamond in value. It is precious for its own beauty and rarity, and precious on account of the labour involved in obtaining it. And who can estimate the preciousness of the sapphire foundations of our faith, the work of redemption which cost the humiliation, suffering, and death of the Son of God to accomplish; and the experience of the truth in the soul wrought out through much sorrow, through doubts, and fears, and terrible

struggles? The sapphire is also one of the purest of the precious stones. The ancient meteoric stone called the Kaaba, built into the sacred mosque at Mecca, and still pressed with devotion by the lips of every pilgrim, may be taken to represent in its blackness and earthliness, the Mohammedan religion. But the foundation of Christianity is a pure transparent sapphire. It has no flaws, no dross, no earthy ingredients. These foundations are steadfast and enduring. They are not composed of perishable materials—not even of rocks that weather and crumble away—but of sapphires, next to the diamond the hardest of the precious stones. Jewels, as a class, are the most lasting of all earthly objects—the most beautiful as well as the most imperishable form in which matter appears. They are therefore expressive types of stability and permanence. The sapphire foundations of the Christian life are everlasting. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. **And I will make thy windows of agates.**—*Agates* are precious stones, partially transparent and uncrystallized. They are mere varieties of quartz, variously coloured by admixtures of different earths; although the neutral tints are the most frequent. They generally occur in rounded nodules, or in veins in igneous rocks, dropping out when such rocks decompose by the action of the elements, and being washed down to the places where they are found by mountain streams. They seem to be the product of elements fused by fire; and in this respect they carry out most faithfully the analogy between the condition of the Church and the nature of the promise, "O thou afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will make thy windows of agates." Out of those fiery trials precious media of spiritual vision will be constructed for it. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Agate windows:*—I. Looking at the emblem in this light, we may suppose windows of agates to mean WINDOWS OF FAITH. Agates are neither transparent as rock crystal, nor opaque as flint; so neither is faith dim as sense, nor bright as heavenly vision. Many things in creation, providence, and redemption are inscrutable to us; and the wider the circle of light spreads around us, the wider does the dark line of our ignorance extend also and touch it at every point. Gazing through these windows we behold things which we see nowhere else. We obtain such a realizing view of God's presence, such an evidence of His perfections, as elevates and spiritualizes our minds, while, at the same time, it humbles us low by the contrast of our own imperfections and unworthiness. We behold His glory as in a glass, and are changed into the same image, saturated with the reflected light of His holiness, permeated with the warmth and the purity of His love. The "altogether lovely One" looketh forth at these windows, showing Himself through the lattice in all the beauty of His person, the perfection of His righteousness, and the sufficiency of His grace. We have a satisfying and transforming view of His person, His atonement, His intercession, His example, His commands and promises, His government and kingdom, as revealed in the Gospel; so that we can enjoy His own prophetic benediction, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." From these upper windows of the soul we obtain the widest view of the horizon around us, and see glorious glimpses of the land that is very far off. Looking down from that elevation, how small and insignificant do the things that appeared great from their own level appear; how unworthy of the thought we bestowed upon them, or the anxiety with which we regarded them. On these western windows of the soul, too, the departing sun shines with concentrated radiance when all the rest of the horizon is wrapped in twilight gloom. It is from thence that another and a brighter world is discerned opening upon our view, while this world is sinking in shadow. II. We may regard these windows as WINDOWS OF FEELING. By this it is meant, not that God will smite the smitten, afflict the afflicted, but that He will make those afflictions which the Church already experiences windows of agates—mediums of communication between the soul and the unseen world—means of deeper insight into, and richer experiences of spiritual things. The afflicted Christian is the only one who has just views of life. It takes a long and painful discipline to correct our early impressions, and show us things in their true aspects and relations. Through the dim windows of affliction how changed is the aspect of the world, how cold, and grey, and desolate; all its radiant glow departed; all its beauteous hues reduced to one dull leaden sadness. The tears of sorrow are like spiritual lenses, showing us the world in its true character as a poor, empty, unsatisfying inheritance. One glimpse through the agate windows of sickness, bereavement, or adversity will impress us more with the vanity of the world's portion, and of a life of sense, than all that the most pensive poetry ever sang, or the most cynical philosophy ever taught. "I will make thy

windows of agates;" not bright and transparent, for our weak eyes, dimmed with pain and weeping, cannot bear the strong sunshine; not dark and opaque, for the soul climbing up and straining to look out and see the light behind the cloud—the beauty beyond the shadow—and baffled in its efforts—would fall back upon itself morbid and despairing. They are windows of agates—neither transparent nor opaque—but mercifully tempered by Him who best knows the requirements of each individual case, and who in all our afflictions is afflicted. III. We may suppose agate windows to be WINDOWS OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER. In admiring a piece of beautiful scenery, we find nothing in it except what we ourselves brought to it. Nature wears the colour of the spirit; and her charms are reflections of charms within ourselves. It is so also in moral things. To the pure all things are pure; while the polluted heart finds impurity in the most innocent things. So also in the spiritual world. Its objects become real, tangible, true, worthy of love, and capable of influencing us, only so far as we ourselves are spiritualized. There is no window so clear as holiness of character, spirituality of mind, purity of heart, singleness of aim. Agate windows are most expressive symbols of our spiritual character. The purest agates are only semi-pellucid: while the great majority of specimens are clouded with dim spots, and streaked with dark lines. And so the purest spiritual character in this world is imperfect. The essential transparency remains, but objects seen through it are dim, distorted, and discoloured. Our indistinct and imperfect views of God, of providence, of the scheme of grace, of the eternal realities and transcendent glories of a perfect state—are owing to the imperfection of our own spiritual character, and the imperfect affinity of our hearts for what is best and purest. These windows of agates are of great practical importance. The principal use and design of ordinary windows in a dwelling is to admit light into the rooms, so that the inmates may see to perform their various household duties. And so, the use of these windows of agates, whether they be windows of faith, of feeling, or of spiritual character, is to let the light of heaven shine in upon our life, that we may discharge our various duties as members of the household of faith. We are not to sit all day long with folded hands at these windows, looking out listlessly or sadly, in mere religious reverie, or in despondent abstraction. The light which we get through them is given to us to work. The light of heaven itself is given for usefulness as well as for beauty. It warms and fertilizes the earth, and ripens the corn. So let the light which streams in upon us through these windows of agates—costly light obtained from faith tried in the furnace; lambent light gleaming from painful afflictions, from the decays of nature; sparkling light struck from sore struggles with sin and self; light coloured by the experience through which it has passed; let that light warm, and quicken, and ripen our souls. (*Ibid.*) "*Thy windows of agates:*"—Rather, as R.V., "pinnacles." The word is derived from that for "sun," and appears to denote those parts of the building which glitter in the sun's rays. Compare the Arab "minaret," used primarily of a lantern or lighthouse. "Agates" (Ezek. xxvii. 16), "sparkling" stone, perhaps "rubies" (R.V.). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The clarified vision:*—The Hebrew word here for window is unusual (*shemashoth*), and this is the only instance of its translation by "window." It means "an opening for the sun." It implies the admission into the house of more than ordinary reflected daylight—the sun streams through it. The agate (*kadkod*) is a glass-clear stone. The writer uses it evidently more because of its clarity than because of its preciousness. As a clear way for the sun, the agate window suggests the desirability of keeping the soul's windows transparently clear. I. THAT GOD, THE SOUL'S SUN, MAY SHINE IN WITHOUT IMPEDIMENT. 1. The Bible may be the agate window. Through it God shines in on man's mind and spirit. 2. This, similarly, should be the office of religious teaching, as in creed and sermon. How important to keep the media of truth transparent. II. THAT THE SOUL, LOOKING OUT, MAY SEE ACCURATELY. Bad glass, steam, or stain on a window confuses outlines. A fly in the telescope may twist the observer's astronomy. All our views of life's landscapes greatly depend on the window through which we look out. Sin stains it. Cynicism discolours it. The sun can shine through a hide or a thin shutter. But the soul can look out only through the clear window. God sees us, shines on us, when we do not see Him. Salvation depends not on His seeing us, but on our seeing Him. III. THAT OUR LIGHT MAY SHINE OUT TO OTHERS. Some one wandering in the darkness may see the light that shines from our life, and be guided to safety. (*Homiletic Review.*) Thy gates of carbuncles.—*The carbuncle:*—This precious stone is found in the East Indies, in colour is an intense scarlet, and held up between your eye and the sun it is a burning coal. The poet puts it into rhythm as he writes—

"Like to the burning coal whence comes its name;
Among the Greeks as Anthrax known to fame."

God sets it high up in Bible crystallography. He cuts it with a Divine chisel, shapes it with a precise geometry, and kindles its fire into an almost supernatural flame of beauty. Its law of symmetry, its law of zones, its law of parallelism, something to excite the amazement of the scientist, chime the cantos of the poet, and arouse the adoration of the Christian. No one but the infinite God could fashion a carbuncle as large as your thumb-nail, and as if to make all ages appreciate this precious stone He ordered it set in the first row of the high-priest's breast-plate in olden time and higher up than the onyx and the emerald and the diamond, and in Ezekiel's prophecies concerning the splendours of the Tyrian court, the carbuncle is mentioned, the brilliancies of the walls and of the tessellated floors suggested by the Bible sentence, "Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire!" (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Gates of carbuncles:*—In my text it is not a solitary specimen that I hand you, as the keeper of a museum might take down from the shelf a precious stone and allow you to examine it. Nor is it the panel of a door that you might stand and study for its unique carvings or bronzed traceries, but there is a whole gate of it lifted before our admiring and astounded vision, ay! two gates of it; ay! many gates of it: "I will make thy gates of carbuncles." What gates? Gates of the Church. Gates of anything worth possessing. Gates of successful enterprise. Gates of salvation. Gates of national achievement. Isaiah, who wrote this text, wrote also all that about Christ "as the lamb to the slaughter," and spoke of Christ as saying, "I have trodden the winepress alone," and wrote, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" And do you think that Isaiah in my text merely happened to represent the gates, as red gates, as carmine gates, as gates of carbuncle? No. He means that it is through atonement, through blood-red struggle, through agonies we get into anything worth getting into. Heaven's gates may well be made of pearl, a bright, pellucid, cheerful crystallization, because all the struggles are over and there is beyond those gates nothing but raptures and cantata and triumphal procession and everlasting holiday and kiss of reunion, and so the twelve gates are twelve pearls, and could be nothing else than pearls. But Christ hung the gates of pardon in His own blood, and the marks of eight fingers and two thumbs are on each gate, and as He lifted the gate it leaned against His forehead and took from it a crimson impress, and all those gates are deeply dyed, and Isaiah was right when he spoke of those gates as gates of carbuncle. (*Ibid.*) *Gate of carbuncle before gate of pearl:*—Mark well and underscore with heavy dashes of the pen the order of the gates. Gate of carbuncle before gate of pearl. Isaiah the Prince saw the one gate centuries before St. John the Exile saw the other. The one you must push open. The other stands open. Gate of a Saviour's atonement before the gate of Divine pardon. Gate of poverty before gate of affluence. Gate of earthly trial before gate of heavenly satisfaction. Through much tribulation you enter the kingdom of God if you ever enter it at all. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 13. **And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.**—*Disciples of Jehovah:*—The expression is probably suggested by what the Servant of Jehovah says of Himself in chap. l. 4; the idea being that the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be the spiritual seed of the Servant. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Inward illumination the spiritual glory of the Church:*—The outward glory of the city (vers. 11,12) is but the sense-representation of the spiritual glory of the Church that dwells therein (ver. 13). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The school of the highest culture:*—I. THE NATURE OF THIS CULTURE. True culture is threefold—physical, intellectual, and moral. Our text relates to the highest form, and implies all the rest. It is complete culture, the development of the whole man. 1. The text presupposes man's ignorance. Man needs teaching, the imparting of truth. (1) There is man's ignorance of self. (2) Of duty. (3) Of God. (4) Of destiny. 2. The statement of the text implies the Divine intention. It is not God's will that man remain in ignorance. 3. The statement of the text announces the Divine plan. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." (1) The student—"Thy children." (2) The Teacher—"The Lord." He is an omniscient Teacher, knowing the truths to be taught, and the temperament and disposition of the students. He is a patient Teacher. He is an omnipresent Teacher. (3) The subjects taught. Language (Zeph. iii. 9). The language of faith, of prayer, of love. Mathematics (Mark viii. 36; 2 Pet. i. 5; Acts xii. 24; Isa. liii. 12; Phil. iii. 8). Political science. The kingdom of God. Our citizenship

is in Heaven: citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. Natural and spiritual science. Of Origins (John i. 1–3). Of preservation (Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3). Of the Divine (John xvii. 3). Of the human (Gen. i. 26). God, man, sin, salvation, duty and destiny are all studied. (4) The methods of teaching. The "Word" method (John v. 39; 2 Tim. iii. 15). The object method (Psalm xix. 1–6). The Holy Spirit method (John xvi. 13). The conscience method (Rom. ii. 15). The corrective method (Prov. iii. 12). II. THE GREAT RESULT. "And great shall be the peace of thy children." 1. This teaching shall result in enlightenment. Culture means light. 2. In elevation. All true culture leads that way. 3. In spiritual strength (Heb. v. 12–14). 4. In peace. There is a threefold peace, peace with God, peace with conscience, peace with fellow-men. This school appeals for students. Will you enter? The condition of entrance is given in John i. 11, 12. The completion of a life course in this school develops the soul for promotion to the University of the New Jerusalem. Every graduate receives the degree of "Sinner saved," and then begins the higher course in the University where boundless prospects and boundless possibilities lie before the student. What other school offers attractions such as these? (*W. C. Kantner, D.D.*) *The teaching unction and common knowledge:*—1. In the writings of all the apostles, as well as in the anticipations of evangelical prophets, this place of the Spirit as instructor and guide of the elect individual is ungrudgingly recognized. James speaks of a wisdom that comes to every believing suppliant direct from the Father of lights. Paul speaks of an enlightenment and revelation that are gifts of the Spirit, and says that "no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." And John speaks of "the anointing of the Holy one" through which all doubts may be resolved, and the lowly disciple made safe against current sophistry and error. Peter asserts that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. Such testimony coming from leading and honoured apostles has a peculiar emphasis and impressiveness about it. The best barrier against heresy which could be raised up was that which consisted in the common knowledge possessed by all who had received the Spirit, and none of the apostles shows the slightest jealousy of the growing insight of their converts. They were quite content that the Church official should be abased and even superseded, so that the work of the teaching Spirit should be magnified. 2. The spirit of man has been degraded by evil, warped by prejudice and mistaken training, distracted and torn in opposite directions by the fickle and contradictory movements of a flesh inflated with egotisms and bubbling self-sufficiencies. It must undergo some radical transformation before it can become the test of what is true. One might as well call in a boiler-riveter organically deaf with the din of his occupation to settle conflicting criticisms respecting a quarter tone in music, or some spirit-drinker with burnt-up tongue and palate to do the work of an accomplished tea-taster, as appeal subtle spiritual questions to such a court as that. It is only after the Spirit has come to possess the nature of a man, and to make the undefiled conscience rule the life, that the nature can become in any sense a test of religious truth. The heart of man must be disengaged from its old embarrassments and distractions, redeemed from the bias of its passion and wilfulness, chastened into docility and meekness and humility, quickened, purified, exalted, before it can discern. It is this specific anointing with the Spirit which confers upon the conscience its new prerogative as a competent judge of truth. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Truth developed in the life by the action of the Spirit of God:*—When a strip of wood or forest has been destroyed by fire, it will sometimes happen that new and better species of trees grow up and take the place of those which have been burned. The seed had been long buried within the ground, but all to no purpose, because it was forestalled and overshadowed by the growths which first got possession of the soil. The earlier species were like feudal lords, who had seized the land and monopolized all the mists and the dews and the rains that came to moisten the sunburnt earth. But in their downfall hidden and worthier seeds had a chance of light and life and dominion. And is it not thus with human nature? The seed of every truth is within us, although there may often be little outward sign of that significant fact. The proud growths of the flesh overshadow, stifle, and choke down the inner growths of the conscience and the moral life. But at last the Spirit of God comes to us like a consuming fire, and then the superficial growths of passion and prejudice are burnt away, and seeds of sublime truth that had been slumbering from the time of man's creation in the image of God flower out into strange life, splendour, and fruitfulness. (*Ibid.*) *The Holy Spirit in relation to the Bible, the Church and the religious teacher:*—If we accept this idea of the common knowledge possessed by believers in Christ who receive the promised

Spirit, what will be our attitude towards the Bible, the Church, the Christian teacher, and all those forms of religious authority so jealously upheld in the past? Does not this idea of common knowledge introduce a competing authority, and bid fair to prove a solvent of ecclesiastical rule and prerogative, and produce a new confusion of tongues? The Churches of the Reformation rightly make the Bible a test of faith, and bring all teaching to the tribunal of its impartial balances. The New Testament is mainly a statement of historical facts from the lips or pens of eye-witnesses, to which there can be no addition by subsequent revelation. In so far as it is a statement of the doctrinal interpretations identified with those facts, it furnishes a permanent record of what was taught by the Spirit to the first generation of believers, and of what was approved and attested in their own experiences by those representatives of the early Churches who received the component parts of the New Testament into the canon. It gives absolutely trustworthy notes of the work of the Spirit in saving and instructing and sanctifying men. The unchanging Spirit is not likely to contradict Himself now, and teach divergent doctrines to a docile recipient of His ministries; and the Church whose members are inwardly led to the acceptance of the truths which accord with the original standards of the Bible proves itself so far a recipient of the same inspiration. The Bible is the seal by which we are to measure our own inspiration and spiritual insight; but it will not do our seeing for us, and each man must perceive for himself and acquire by the use of his spiritual senses this common knowledge. 2. But some tell us that the Church is the assay-house of religious thought, and that all statements of doctrine must be weighed in the scale of ecclesiastical balances. What have the early councils said? What does the congregation of cardinals or the House of Convocation say to-day? Our reply is that the spiritual discernment of the rulers of a Church must be tested by the scale or standard presented in the Bible and handed down from those who were themselves both personal followers of Christ and the first recipients of Pentecostal gifts. A Church may fall and grope in darkness as woefully as an individual, and then its authority ceases. The mere shell of a Church corporation cannot possibly be a centre of authority, for its directing personnel is ever changing, and if it be found in conflict with the primitive revelations of the Spirit, the very sanctity of the Church is lost and its right to teach forfeited. 3. It is sometimes argued that the teacher duly certified by the Christian Church is a specialist, and that we must give ourselves implicitly into his hands, just as we give ourselves into the hands of any other professional man who has the technical knowledge we lack. Well, we may recognize that within certain limits he who has not yet received the Spirit must be indebted for such second-hand knowledge as he possesses to the Church and its ministries. But, after all, there is no specialism in connection with the truths which concern the daily life and experience of believers. All specialism is in non-essentials, and the cry for the specialist not only reflects on the impartiality of the Spirit, and implies that His illumination is particular rather than universal, but assumes that religion is a thing of intermittent rites and functions rather than a daily life in which the humblest is schooled to knowledge and insight. (*Ibid.*) *Religious education the safeguard of the nation:*—There are three radical defects in the theory of a secular education. I. IT IGNORES THE EXISTENCE AND THE FUNCTIONS OF CONSCIENCE. Whatever conscience may be, all agree that it is that which is educable. That it is a moral something in man, that may be trained to be in him a monitor and a guide—something that will respond to every voice of truth and of justice. While it is true that some well-informed or enlightened consciences may go astray, yet the rule is, that, as is the conscience so is the virtue of the individual. What are the prime factors in an educated conscience? 1. Belief in a personal God—the Author and Creator of the human mind—He who is, in Himself, the supreme reason of virtue. 2. Reverence for God's laws. 3. The dread of the Divine displeasure. By what force would you deter man from vice and crime? By the displeasure of good citizens? But that displeasure is the creation of a religious education. By the beneficence of public morals? But that beneficence is written all over the constitution of nature, whose author is God. Without this recognition of a personal God—whose laws are to be revered, whose displeasure is to be dreaded—without such an educated conscience there can be no authority, as there can be no standard, either for private or public virtue. II. IT OVERLOOKS THE FACT THAT SECULAR EDUCATION CONTAINS NO ELEMENT TO PURIFY AND REFORM. Science enlightens, but it cannot renew and elevate human nature which is depraved in principle and sinful in practice. Knowledge is power; but it is a power for good or evil, according

to the controlling motives. III. IT OVERLOOKS THE FACTS THAT THE STABILITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT IS IN THE MORAL CONVICTIONS OF THE PEOPLE. (*J. P. Newman, D.D.*) Great shall be the peace of thy children.—*The great peace of God's pupils:*—"Thy children"—whose? To answer this question is to get at the true key to the whole of this part of the prophecy. The words were spoken to the exiled Jews in Babylon, but were plainly meant to cover more than their needs. They are words which picture and promise the condition which should one day embrace the whole earth. I. They are men who have got over the great difficulty in all teaching; THEY ARE WILLING TO LEARN. They are eager. They come cheerfully to that which has grown to be a pleasure. They are on the outlook for knowledge. Now, if any man is really on the outlook for knowledge he will be sure to get it; perhaps not all at once, but little by little. There has already been some progress made in learning where this is the temper of the pupil. How much, only those various and manifold testings of their knowledge which come up in every man's life, can really reveal. II. If this be the character of the learners, WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF THE TEACHER? The pupil learns what is the character of the Teacher in the lessons he gives. The lessons He gives are according to the wants and capacities of His pupils. And if only we will, we may learn this about the Teacher, from the lessons He gives us, how great is His interest in each of us; how accurate His knowledge of us; how constant His regard for us; how completely fitted His wise treatment; how full His whole conduct is of care and love; how, in a word, God is as loving as He is wise, as tender as He is strong, and as constant in His affection towards us as He is persistent in bringing the same lesson before our eye, until we have learnt it by heart. Again; the pupil learns what is the character of the Teacher from the bearing of the Teacher toward him after He has given him his lessons. Does He turn away and leave the pupil to himself? Does He set the task, and then vanish out of sight? Does He leave the lesson with the pupil, and the pupil with the lesson, and make no further sign? We know that, in regard to God, this is not so. It is true, that when God wishes us to work out some great lesson of our life, He withdraws from us, as it were, that we may put forth all our strength, that we may grapple with it, and, if we can, master it. But it is also true that God never leaves His pupils altogether. His eye is still resting upon them when they think Him a great way off. His very presence is with them when they think that they are utterly alone. And when He sees that the right moment has come He speaks the cheery word; He parts asunder the thick storm cloud, and lets the light of His countenance shine upon us and illumine our path. Nay, still more; how many hard and soul-searching questions has God helped us to spell out; how frequently the guiding and sustaining hand has been over our own, when, with painfulness and much sorrow, we have been trying to write out in our lives some fair copy of a simple command! Even after the lesson is given, how patient God is, how ready to help, how gentle, how loving, how merciful. The pupil also learns what the Teacher is, from the great example of His own lessons which He, the Teacher, shows Himself. III. WHAT WILL COME OF THE PUPIL'S LEARNING THESE LESSONS. He may not learn any one of them thoroughly. He may feel, in regard to much of his knowledge of God, for example, that it needs revision, correction, enlargement. He may be conscious that some of the most elemental truths in Divine wisdom have to be learned and relearned. There does, however, come a result from all his application which will be all the more pronounced when the education itself is perfected. And what is this result? "Great peace." 1. The peace comes after the learning, not before. The peace is after the victory, not before the battle. 2. Another thing is also to be noted: this "great peace" does not come to us by mastering every lesson at once, however hard and difficult it may be, but in patiently resting in Him who has sent it. (*J. J. Goadby.*) *The Gospel of the children:*—In every age the children were included in the promise and in the Church. I. THE PERIOD. 1. It is impressible. The photographer's plate is very sensitive. When he removes the covering which keeps off the light from the sun, the image of the object directly opposite is instantaneously impressed on the plate. So is the child's mind. Whatever is the object of its observation—good or bad—the image is made. What care should be taken lest that sensitive plate should be exposed to that which is sinful! 2. It expands its impressions. When any one cuts the initials of his name on the bark of a young tree, as the tree grows so the letters will become larger. The child receives impressions to grow with its being. 3. It is a period when correction is possible. Evil impressions may cling to a child, but we can stop their influence by admonition and warning. II. THE

LEARNING. Instruction is the birthright of every child; national prosperity depends on the early training of its families. Spiritual instruction is the best gift that parents can give to their children. The prophet saw a vision in this chapter which was far removed from his own time—the Gospel period. Let us look at the adaptation. 1. It is the Gospel of childhood. Some look on the Gospel as only comprehensible by men of mature age. This is an error. The child can learn the alphabet of the language, although it cannot pronounce its long words. Timothy from a child knew the Scriptures. 2. It is the Gospel of growth. The story of Bethlehem grows into a fact. Accounts of miraculous cures, which only appear to a child wonderful, become the evidences of divinity. The great fact of the Crucifixion, which only creates pity in a child's heart, grows to the importance of life itself. The prayer repeated by infant lips becomes the "fervent prayer of the righteous man." 3. It is the Gospel of maturity. Generally the things of childhood are unfit for youth, and those of youth are unsuitable for manhood; but the Gospel expands, and is abreast of every experience. III. THE BLESSING. It will be a great peace. This is the fruit of Divine instruction. 1. God's Word brings peace to the heart. The child as well as the man needs that peace. God's Word brings peace to the home. 3. Peace in death. The tranquil spirit which the child knew sixty years before is the sheet-anchor which stays the soul in every trying hour. We appeal to the children and say that if they are to be taught of the Lord, they must be willing to learn. Then we further urge the children to obedience and prayer in respect of their teachers. (*J. Davies, M.A.*) *Spiritual teaching:*—I. DIVINE TEACHING. 1. We all need Divine teaching. 2. We are all by nature opposed to it. 3. Divine teaching is promised. II. ITS EFFECT. Peace, great peace. Learn—1. Our relationship to God. "The children of Zion" are also children of God. 2. Our rightful privileges. Spiritual instruction and abiding peace. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

Ver. 15. Behold, they shall surely gather together.—*The adversaries of the Church defeated:*—The unwearied mischievous attempts of the adversaries of God's people in the world, as they are made without God, so they shall end in shame to themselves. I. THE ADVERSARIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE UNWEARIEDLY ATTEMPTING MISCHIEF AGAINST THEM. "They shall surely gather together." This is sure upon various grounds. 1. He who foreknows all their thoughts, inclinations and purposes from everlasting hath foretold it. 2. So long as there are any of the children of the devil out of hell, he will be inspiring them with malice against the Church of God on earth. 3. The very defeats and disappointments which the enemies of the Church receive make them renew their attempts with greater violence and fury. They are not the more disheartened, but the more exasperated. 4. The fearful expectation of future vengeance is a spur to their diligent use of all the present opportunities of sinning. II. THESE ATTEMPTS ARE WITHOUT GOD. "Not by Me." 1. The Church's enemies can neither do nor contrive the doing of anything absolutely without God. No creature can subsist, no faculty can perform any of its operations, if Providence did not concur. All the plots which are formed beneath prove vain and fruitless unless there be permission given from above. 2. The enemies of the Church can do nothing effectually but as God really employs them to be the instruments of His just displeasure (Hab. i. 12; Psa. xvii. 13, 14; Isa. x. 5, 17, xiii. 5). 3. The attempts of enemies against God's people are, notwithstanding, without His approbation. 4. The attempts of enemies, when they have most success, are without God's truly favourable presence. 5. The attempts of enemies at the time which the prophet here refers to will be without God's assistance, and consequently without success. III. THESE ATTEMPTS WILL ISSUE IN RUIN TO THEMSELVES. "Whosoever shall gather together," etc. 1. The greatest attempt which was ever made by the devil against the Church, in the Person of Christ Himself, became the means of subverting his own kingdom. 2. The standing of the Church's enemies is the most precarious and uncertain thing. 3. All that they have, or can have, to support and defend them, will not be sufficient when their appointed destruction comes (Isa. xxxi. 3). 4. The enemies of the Church are raised up for this purpose that God may honour himself upon them. 5. The greatest of enemies that the Church of God ever yet had have fallen, though once as likely to stand as any now or hereafter can be. 6. The present enemies of the Church have indeed begun to fall, which is a hopeful token that they shall surely fall. IV. WHY SHALL THE ATTEMPTS OF THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE END THUS IN THEIR OWN RUIN?

"For thy sake." 1. Some read the words, They shall fall "before thee," that thou mayest see it. 2. "For thy sake" cannot mean for thy merit, but for thy benefit. 3. "For thy sake" may mean, for the kindness and care which I bear to thee. V. USE. 1. Security and distrust are sinful extremes and both to be avoided. 2. A people dear to God and peculiarly interested in Him, are in a far more blessed condition than all the earth besides. 3. The greatest danger which God's people are or can be in, is when they engage God against them by sin, and provoke Him to favour their adversaries. 4. The obstructions of mercy are on our part, not on God's. 5. The memorials of past mercies are to be preserved for our support in future difficulties. (*T. Cruso.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **Behold, I have created the smith.**—*Hope for the Church in the sovereignty of God:*—The general meaning evidently is, that God can certainly redeem His pledge, because all instruments and agents are alike at His disposal and under His control. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The Church's fears silenced:*—The idea is that the Church has been saying, Where is that awful man the smith? The Lord says in reply, You see that smith? The Church answers, Yes, too well. The Lord retorts, I made him, I hold him within the bend of My fingers, and one quiver, and there is no more smith to be seen. But the Church says, He is blowing his bellows. The Lord says, I made those bellows. The Church says, See what a fire he is kindling! The Lord says, He got the coals from My mines, and I could shut down that mining shaft so that he could never get another cinder. As for all these little tyrants and enemies and mockers and jibers and sceptics and infidels and others, have no fear of them; if any of them have any sincerity the reward shall not be withheld, and that sincerity may turn by-and-by to intelligence and to faith, but in so far as they mock and sneer and contemn have no fear of them; they are creatures, not creators; the smith is only a mechanic of a low degree or high; he is not Divine, he is most human. But, saith the Church, yet there is a weapon formed against me. The Lord says, So there may be, but it has no edge, and it has no handle; and if any man were foolish enough to take it up to strike with, it would curl up in his hand. But, Lord, there are tongues that rise against me in judgment, fluent tongues, yea eloquent tongues, and it is not in my power to answer their wordy arguments or to follow the tortuous train of their reasoning. And the Lord replies, Let them talk; they will soon exhaust their vocabulary. Never interrupt a man who has a bad cause. He trusts to interruption. He thinks the interruption may create for him an opportunity of abandoning the main line of his impeachment. The way to answer a foolish and unjust accuser is to listen to him in silence. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.**—*Worthless weapons:*—I. GLANCE AT THE WEAPONS WHICH HAVE BEEN USED AGAINST THE CHURCH COLLECTIVELY. 1. The first weapon that we notice is an old one—Infidelity. Nothing can be more palpable than this—humanity refuses to be infidel. 2. Behold another of these hostile implements is the weapon of persecution. A weak weapon, nevertheless. II. AS REGARDS THE CHURCH INDIVIDUALLY "NO WEAPON THAT IS FORMED AGAINST IT SHALL PROSPER." 1. The weapon of slander shall not prosper. 2. The weapon of doubt. 3. The weapon of death. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *The godly man's heritage:*—I. THE ARMOURY OF SATAN. The enemy of souls is likened by our Lord to "a strong man armed;" He commands principalities and powers; skilled in hostilities, He has different modes of attack; He employs a great variety of weapons. 1. Persecution. And yet, when we estimate the results of persecution, we have to confess it has not prospered. It has been mightily restrained, and its remains have been turned to the praise of God. It has purified the Church, and given new impetus to the truth. Sometimes it has united the despised forces of Zion, so that their strength has been greatly increased. 2. Temptation. With this weapon the archer sorely wounded our first parents, and he has ever since too successfully hurled it against their progeny. But it does not prosper; it strips us of self-confidence, eradicates pride, drives us for safety to the Hiding Place, and presses upon us the constant necessity for that shield of faith which "quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked." You cannot afford to despise temptations; but you need not despair under them while you call in the aid engaged to you. 3. False teaching. Clothed as an angel of light, the tempter first instilled error into the mind of Eve, before he could produce disobedience. It is no light affliction to have the mind's view of Divine truth perverted. Various, however, as are the shades of

false teaching, they do not prosper—they flourish for a time like grass upon the housetops, but they fill no man's bosom with harvest sheaves. The Word of God outlives them all. Each of those weapons was directed with fullest force against the Son of God. II. THE WORLDLY MAN'S MALICE. "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." The slightest whisper of suspicion is greedily sought after, if it cast but a shadow on the character of any saint, and it is repeated till it grows to calumnious dimensions, and "eateth as doth a canker." The worst manifestation of this malignant plague is that which makes its appearance within the Church: when those who should be the guardians become the assailants of a brother's character, and prejudice and suspicion displace confidence and charity. In the case of the true Christian, integrity of life will disappoint all the aspersions of the wicked. III. THE GODLY MAN'S VINDICATION. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." What an inheritance it is! It comprises all the blessings contained in God's Word; and the fulfilment of all His gracious promises. (*W. G. Lewis.*) *The Christian's heritage:*—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE. 1. Weapons are formed against him. No Christian need expect aught else. As Israel's experience in the wilderness, so the Christian's in the world. 2. Tongues rise against him. From the days of Cain it has been so, and will be so to the end. So they treated the Lord, and so they will treat His disciples. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S SECURITY. 1. No weapon shall prosper. The Christian's enemies may be mighty, malignant, crafty, constant; but more mighty, more wise, more watchful, more indefatigable and loving is his protector. 2. Every tongue he shall condemn. (1) He shall do it himself by well-doing (1 Pet. ii. 15). (2) God shall do it for him. (3) It shall be done sufficiently on earth (Ps. xxxvii. 6). (4) Perfectly in eternity (Job xix. 25). See also Zechariah iii. Let Christians see to it that they so live that men speaking evil of them shall do it "falsely," and God shall fully vindicate them. Who has this security? and in answer see—III. THE CHRISTIAN'S CHARACTER. "The servants of the Lord." This security is described as—IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S HERITAGE; and this description may teach us—1. That while the Christian is a servant, he is also a son and heir. 2. That his security is a thing not of merit, but of inheritance. It is a legacy secured to him by the death of Christ. It is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. 3. We may be sure that a heritage from God is a certain possession. He is "without variableness or shadow of turning." V. THE CHRISTIAN'S TITLE. Perhaps this last clause had been better translated uniformly with previous one: "And this is their righteousness (justification) from Me." But taking it as we have it, we may interpret it as teaching us—1. That the Christian's justification is of God. It is "the righteousness which is of God by faith." 2. That the Christian's sanctification is of God. It is He who worketh in him "to will and to do of God's good pleasure." 3. That boasting is excluded. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" 4. That security is perfect; for if God justify, who can condemn (Rom. viii. 34)? and if God sanctify, He will "perfect that which concerneth" us. This clause thus explains as well as ratifies the promise, and, farther, it tells us how we may secure this promise for ourselves. Righteousness we have not by nature, righteousness we cannot attain of ourselves—but righteousness we may receive from God. (*D. Jamison, B.A.*) **Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.**—*Justification through imputed righteousness:*—In these words, which are spoken of all true believers, more particularly, we may observe—I. THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD, AND OF ALL THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES THAT THEY ENJOY OR ARE ENTITLED TO. It is "a righteousness;" such a righteousness as answers all the demands of the Divine law, a righteousness with which God is well pleased. II. HOW BELIEVERS BECOME POSSESSED OF THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. They have it not of themselves. It is not a righteousness wrought out by them or inherent in them, but a righteousness which they have of God. God, in the person of the Father, devised and provided it; God, in the person of the Son, wrought it out for them. It is also through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to believe the report of the Gospel, and receive Christ exhibited and freely offered to them in it, that they come to be actually possessed of this righteousness. III. THE INTEREST THAT BELIEVERS HAVE IN THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS THE GROUND OF THEIR JUSTIFICATION. It is called "their righteousness." Though it is not theirs originally or subjectively, it is theirs really. It is theirs by the free gift of God. IV. THE CERTAINTY OF THE GREAT AND IMPORTANT TRUTH ASSERTED IN THE TEXT, namely, that the righteousness of believers, or that righteousness by which they are justified, and on which

their title to everlasting life and all the blessings of salvation is wholly founded, is a righteousness which they have not of themselves, but of God, or by His free gift and gracious imputation. This is what Jehovah Himself declares and attests in the plainest manner: "Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." (*D. Wilson.*) *The excellent properties and qualities of that righteousness by which believers are justified.* It is—1. A perfect righteousness. 2. A Divine righteousness. 3. A justice-satisfying righteousness. 4. A law-magnifying righteousness. 5. A God-glorifying righteousness. 6. A righteousness that is freely given to the unworthy and the guilty. 7. An everlasting righteousness. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER LV.

VERS. 1–13. **Ho, every one that thirsteth.**—*The cries of the water-carriers:*—Public messages [Isaiah] would, as a matter of course, deliver publicly in the frequented streets and bazaars, and in the temple area, frequently using the common cries of the forerunners of the nobles, the morning call of the temple watchmen, who had been waiting to proclaim the striking of the sun's first rays upon the pinnacles, the groans of the sabbals (or burden-bearers), the tumult of the buyers and sellers, and the sing-song invitation of the water-carriers, and purveyors of wine and cooling drinks, as his texts,—just such cries and invitations as one may hear to-day in Cairo, Jerusalem, or Damascus. Standing at a street corner he hears a voice, "All ye that are thirsty, buy my cooling waters, and refresh your hearts," and he forthwith bursts out with his own competitive cry, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," etc. (*F. Sessions.*) *Water, wine and milk:*—Hitzig, Hendewerk and Knobel understand water, wine and milk as the rich material enjoyments which the exiles have in prospect on returning to their fatherland, whereas they are now paying tribute in Babylon, and rendering personal service to their masters without deriving any benefit therefrom. But the prophet knows of a water even higher than natural water (chap. xliv. 3; cf. xli. 17), and a higher than the natural wine (chap. xxv. 6); he knows of an eating and drinking surpassing mere material enjoyment (chap. lxv. 13). As shown by the very fact that water is placed first, water, wine and milk are not the products of the Holy Land, but figures of spiritual revival, refreshing and nourishment (1 Pet. ii. 2, τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *God eager for sinners:*—God would have the attention of sinners; He calls for it. Are not sinners eager for God? Oh, no! It is God who is eager for sinners; and so He calleth "Ho!" Men pass by with their ears full of the world's tumult; and God calleth, again and again, "Ho! ho!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Gospel first addressed to human necessity:*—A great appeal is addressed to those who are athirst. Thus the Lord accommodates His ministry to human necessity. When men are thirsting for water He does not offer them sublime visions of the future, or stately ideas concerning the economies and dominions of time. He would say to men, Let us, in the first place, supply your need; until your thirst is quenched your mind cannot be at rest; until your bodily necessities are supplied your imagination will be unable to exercise itself in high thoughts. The promises of God are addressed to our necessities for more than merely temporary reasons. There is a whole philosophy of government in such appeals. Only at certain points can we profess to understand God, and those points touch our need, our pain, our immediate desire; when we are quite sure that God gives us water for our bodily thirst we may begin at least to feel that there is a possibility that He may not neglect the more burning thirst of the soul. God approaches the spirit through the body. The God who grows corn for our hunger may also have bread for our spirit's cry of weakness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Come! come!*—It is "Come—come." That is the most familiar word in the Bible! It seems to be a favourite word. The word "Come" occurs six hundred and forty-two times in the Bible. It is "Come to the supper;" Come to the waters;" "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Through all sorrows, through all trials, through all nights of darkness, through all calamities, through all temptations, it rings out, "Come! Come! Come!" I remember, when I was a boy in the country, being envious of the old sexton who used to lay hold of the bell-rope, and start the bell

that shook the meeting-house, calling the people for miles around to prayer. The poorest man, trudging along the turnpike-road, knew that the bell called him just as much as it called the rich farmer riding behind his prancing and capering pair. And so this Gospel bell calls to palaces and to huts, to robes and to rags, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come." When the sexton had struck one stroke, why did he not wind up the rope and stop? The people had all heard it. But no; he kept on ringing, until, besweated and exhausted, he sat down. When he began to ring there were none present. When he concluded ringing, the roads were full of waggons, and the church door was thronged with people who had come to worship God. And so we must keep on ringing this Gospel bell. Though, perhaps, few may now come, we will keep on ringing, until, after a while, men shall come as clouds, and as "doves to their windows." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Spiritual Thirst:*—In a man spiritually athirst there are seven qualities answerable to those in a man naturally athirst. 1. Emptiness. 2. Exquisite sense—a painful sense. 3. Peculiar cares and thoughts. All a man's thoughts, in such a condition, are for water to cool and refresh him (Acts ii. 37, xvi. 30). 4. Impatience (Ex. xvii. 3). 5. Vehemency of desire. 6. Diligent endeavour. 7. Constant languishing. Delay doth but increase the thirst the more. Nothing will put an end to spiritual thirst but Jesus Christ. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *The Jews in exile prosperous yet thirsting:*—Who are these thirsty souls, panting for a satisfaction which they have not yet found? They are the people of the hill country, now exiled to the plains. They have been bereft of the companionable apocalypse of the heights, and they are now immured in the unsuggestive monotony of the plains. I do not think you will find a single helpful figure in the entire Bible borrowed from the plains. The plains lie prone as a speechless sphinx. The hill country is full of voices, loud in their intimations, prodigal in revelations. Its phenomena are the messengers of the infinite. There towers the rugged height, firm and immovable, standing sure and steadfast through the fickle and varied years. What is its suggestion? "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Yonder come the treasure-laden clouds, driving in from the great deep. They unburden their wealth upon the shoulders of Carmel, clothing it with a garment of rare and luxuriant beauty. What is their significance? "Thy mercy reached even unto the clouds." Here, on these bare, basaltic heights the tired and heated traveller rests in the cool and healing shadow of a friendly rock. What is the speech of the shadow? "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." In the hill country all things are but the vestures and vehicles of larger things of spiritual import. The light, soft wind that stirs and breathes in the dawn—it is God who rides upon a cherub, yea, who "flies upon the wings of the wind." The gentle, mollifying rain falling upon the parched, bruised, broken stems of grass: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." The end of the drought; the unsealing of the springs among the hills; the gladsome sound of the river as it laughs and dances down the bare and rocky gorge: what is its significance? "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." It was an expressive, voiceful, suggestive land. Its features interpreted the face and character of God. Land and people were in communion, and their intercourse concerned the nearness and the favour and the providence of the Lord of hosts. But now the land and the people are divorced. The people are borne away into captivity. They leave the hill-country, so rich in interpreting speech, and they pass into the speechless monotony of the plains. Their environment is dumb. Their dwelling-place is no longer a sacrament: it is common, insignificant, speechless. They have passed from nature to art, and from art to artifice. They have left the shepherd and have met the merchant. They have left the work of the labourers in pastures and dressers of vineyards for a swift and feverish civilization. Now, take the people of the bracing, speaking, hill country, and immure them in this sweltering and superficial plain. In all the crowded interests by which they are engirt there is nothing suggestive of God. There was grandeur, but the grandeur had no voice. It was grandeur without revelation, and grandeur without revelation is never creative of awe. Where there is no awe, men step with flippant tread. The exile felt the glamour, felt the power of the grandeur, but in the glamour and grandeur forgot his God. His vision was more and more horizontal, and less and less vertical. Ambition waxed feverish, and aspiration waxed faint. The spirit of the conqueror infected the captive. The babble of Babylon entered into Israel. Success was enthroned in place of holiness, and the soul bowed down and worshipped it. The exile embraced the world, and shut out the infinite. Now, what was the issue of that? The exile made money. His body revelled in conditions of ease. His carnal

appetites delighted themselves in fatness. He climbed into positions of eminence and power. What else? "In the fulness of his sufficiency he was in straits." The body luxuriated; the soul languished. He drenched the body with comforts; but he couldn't appease its tenant. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up, eat, drink, and be merry!" And still the soul cried out, "I thirst," and disturbed him like an unquiet ghost. He spent money and more money, but was never able to buy the appropriate bread. He plunged into increased labours, but his labours reaped only that "which satisfied not." The body toiled, the brain schemed, the eyes coveted, and still the soul cried out, "I thirst." Now, when there sits in the soul a hungry unrest and a feverish thirst, life will drop into faintness, weariness and despair. All things become stale, flat, and unprofitable. We "spend our money for that which is not bread, and we labour for that which satisfieth not." "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The true imperialism:*—Has this no pertinency for our own day? Acquisition and expansion are the primary notes of modern life. And is there no thirst, no disquietude of spirit? Our novels and our poetry are full of the drooping leaf. Behind the droop there is the thirst. The literature only reflects the people. Business circles never abounded as they do to-day in faint and weary men. They get and spend, and spend and get, but through it all persists the inward thirst. England is thirsting for life. What we need is the infinitely gracious ministry of the Eternal Son of God. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." I. There is to be THE DISCIPLINE OF THE EAR. There is to be a determined, resolute effort to listen to God. When I turn over the pages of the New Testament, and the Old Testament as well, I am greatly surprised at the emphasis with which is given the injunction to hear. "Hear, ye deaf." Every page sends out the cry of the herald—Hearken, listen, incline your ear. It is wonderful how often the Master repeated the injunction, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." That is not a kind of mild, kindly counsel, but an urgent, strenuous appeal to men and women in imminent peril. As though they were disinclined, or did it lazily and easily. He seems to say, Put work into hearing, make it a business, put some intenseness into it. The voices of the world are so clamorous, so fascinating, so easily enticing, that you are in great danger of being allured unless you set yourself resolutely to attend to God. "Hearken diligently unto Me;" put work into listening to Me, in the Parliament, in the Council House, on the Exchange, in the shop and the warehouse, and in the pulpit. There are many clamorous voices around you, those of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, Mr. Pliable, Mr. Time-Server, Mr. Love-of-the-World. Then pull yourself together, says the Master and the prophet; engage yourself with such intenseness amidst all the bustling clamour, that you may catch the upward calling of your God. II. The discipline of the ear is accompanied by THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HEART. Listen and then yield. "Let the wicked forsake his way" (and then something infinitely harder), "and the unrighteous man his thoughts." I find it a comparatively easy thing to forsake a way; but I find it almost insuperably difficult to forsake a thought. Hear the Highest and then uncompromisingly obey. You say impossible! Idleness creates the impossible, says Robert South. I think perhaps one of the great needs of our time in personal and national life, is that some nation should resolutely address itself to listen to the voice of God, and when she has resolutely listened and confidently heard, then to resolutely and deliberately attempt the impossible. Let her begin by forsaking her own wicked ways. Let her hearken diligently to the Divine voice and then definitely and unwaveringly follow in pursuit, even though the way lead apparently to an impassable height. Let her return to the Lord, and let there be no longer a democracy, an aristocracy, a plutocracy, but a Theocracy willing gladly to be counselled by Jehovah. III. WHAT IS THE ISSUE OF THIS OBEDIENCE? Suppose the thirsty nation oppressed, turned herself to listen to Jehovah and began to interpret the voice Divine, and suppose she addressed herself with all the majesty of Divine power to the pursuit of the ideal discerned, what would happen? The issue of such a demeanour is portrayed for us with wonderful prodigality in the chapter. 1. There is the assured promise of fuller life. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Hitherto life had been a thin existence, a mere surface glittering, a superficial movement. Now there shall be vitality, awakening and stirring in undreamed-of depths. Life shall be no longer confined to the channels of the appetites; life shall no longer be a mere matter of senses and sensations confined to the outer courts and corridors of the life, but you shall begin to live in the innermost self. The unused shall be aroused and exercised; the unevolved shall be unpacked; benumbed instincts shall be liberated; buried

powers of discernment shall come trooping from the grave; new intelligence shall be born, and the sea of iniquity shall ebb, and the sea shall give up its dead. Life shall be no longer scant and scrimpy. You shall delight yourself, not in leanness but in fatness, every tissue of yourself shall be fed, and the outer life shall bear all manner of fruit, and the leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations. 2. Mark the succession, and we get an exceedingly pregnant suggestion. We have got a nation listening, we have got a nation doing, we have got a nation now living, with its powers evolved, and in active exercise. What next? "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." What is that? It means that a true and glorified national life is to be followed by a true and glorified imperialism. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God." That is the true imperialism—empire by moral and spiritual sovereignty, allurement of dominion by the fascinating radiance of a pure and satisfied life. "Gentiles shall come to the light, and kings to the brightness of the rising." It is empire not merely by the aid of Maxim guns, but by great heartening Gospels proclaimed by a great redeemed, glorified people. This is to be the shining goal of true national ambition. The mission of the great people, according to this chapter, is to be this: We are to be witnesses to the people, leaders and commanders of the people, witnesses ceaselessly reiterating the truths of the heartening Gospel, proving in the power of our own redemption our fitness to be leaders of the people, going out as path-finders amongst the benighted peoples. "They shall be called" (I want no more glorious title for the country) "the restorer of paths to dwell in." 3. Now, mark further the issue. A true imperialism, I will not say is to be succeeded, but is to be accompanied by a splendid magnanimity. When the nation has hearkened diligently unto God, and follows determinedly in the pursuit of His will, all little-mindedness has to pass away in the great spacious ambitions. The pure and the exalted people are to share the spacious thought of God, and this I take to be the meaning of the word, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." "What are Thy thoughts like?" "As the heavens are higher than the earth." God's thoughts are lofty, spacious, broad; so our thoughts must be comprehensive, full of an all-inclusive sympathy which vibrates to the interest of each, as though each contained the welfare of the other. The truly imperial people are to share this largeness of idea and ideal and all inclusive sympathy. All parochial peddling and sterile individualism shall yield to a pregnant altruism, and mean patriotism is to be supplanted by a generous fructifying cosmopolitanism. The annexation of territory will be regarded as infinitely inferior to the salvation of the world. Influence shall not be measured by mileage, but by magnanimity. Empire will not be computed by so many leagues of earth, but by the multitude of redeemed and liberated souls. And the outskirts of sovereignty will not be contained by bristling guns, but "They shall call her walls salvation and her gates praise." 4. We have an exalted, glorified empire, and according to this prophet, there is to be nothing wavering or uncertain about the moral empire of such a people. For them a help-giving ministry will be inevitable. "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven," etc. The rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, the bringers of the spring time; and the nation truly imperial, and filled with the living Spirit of the living God, shall be the spring-time maker amongst the children of men, and the creator of gladness and music and song. The prophet himself bursts into song: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." That is to be the ministry of the nation. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." The thorn with the sharp-piercing, pain-giving spikes: instead of that shall come up the fir tree—from which were made the musical instruments, and especially the framework of the harp; "instead of the thorn, the pain-making thing, shall come up the fir tree," the music-making thing; the glorified people shall move among the scattered peoples, and shall exercise the beautiful ministry of changing the creators of pain into the makers of melody and praise. "Instead of the briar," with its bitter, poisonous sting, "shall come up the myrtle tree," with its glossy leaves, and white flowers and grateful perfume. The redeemed and consecrated nation shall exult in a missionary enterprise which shall change the poisonous enmities and jealousies of the people into the perfume of sweet and gracious sentiments, and the chastened delights of a holy and blameless life. Is not this an ambition worthy of the English people of our own day? (*Ibid.*) *The gracious invitation*:—I. THE INVITATION ITSELF. 1. The universality of the offer. 2. The freeness of the gift. "He that hath no money"—he that is in spiritual bankruptcy. 3. The fulness of the blessings which

this salvation contains. They are represented by the three terms, water, wine and milk. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION. These are manifold and various. 1. There is, the contrast between the blessings offered and those for which men are now so laboriously toiling. 2. The character of Him through whom the blessings are to be obtained. 3. The present nearness of God to us and His abundant willingness to pardon. 4. The fact that God's "ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts." He pardons like a God. 5. God's Word "shall not return unto Him void." There is profound encouragement in the thought that back of these agencies of the Gospel, which seem so weak as compared with those powers of depravity in the soul with which they must contend, lies the changeless purpose of Him who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." 6. The profound interest felt by all holy beings everywhere in the salvation of the sinner. That profound sympathy with man in his efforts for salvation which our Lord so beautifully represents by the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, the inspired prophet here represents by the joy of inanimate nature over this return of the sinner to Him who is the Fountain of life. 7. The beneficent results of the acceptance of this invitation. "Instead of the thorn," etc. Divine grace works a complete transformation in the heart into which it comes. It roots out the thorns and briars of selfishness, of pride, of avarice, of unbelief and every hurtful lust. It implants in their room all the graces that adorn the Christian character. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Gospel invitation without restriction*:—Man may erect his barriers around that fountain, God erects none. It is not, Come by laboured preparation—by penance and fasting, by pilgrimage and mortification. It is not, "Come"—but you must come by dogma and rubric, by sect and shibboleth. Neither is it, "Come"—but you must come with some golden or jewelled bucket to fetch up the water; you must come like Naaman of old, laden with costly offerings, talents of silver and gold, and changes of raiment. But, "Come," just as you are, "without money and without price;" without distinction, whether natural or spiritual, of class or rank or caste, birth or blood or pedigree. "Come," though you may have but an earthen pitcher to draw with; "come," though you can only lave up the water in the rough palm of your hands. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) "*Come to the waters*:"—The Lord even thirsteth to be thirsted after. (*J. Trapp.*) *Man's misery and God's call*:—I. SIN IS MISERY, FAILURE, KEEN AND URGENT WANT. Isaiah draws a picture which Orientals would appreciate far more vividly than we, whose utmost pain from thirst only means that on some holiday excursion we have felt the heat inconvenient, and have not happened immediately upon a fountain. He speaks, not of one thirsty man, but of a number, evidently a caravan of travellers. No one who heard him would fail to think of the burnt and sandy plains, a little to the south, on which sometimes a whole company of travellers might wander from their way, and exhaust their provisions, and grow feeble and gaunt and desperate. The hot breeze whirls the burning sand around them. The simoom wind wails in the distance. Phantom waters gleam with a cruel mockery on this side or that. Their own fever creates illusions which distract them. The skeletons of others, lost like themselves, glare upon them. Their steps are feeble, and their tongues cleave to their mouths, when suddenly all that they could not find finds them, and a glad voice calls, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters! This fountain is deep enough for all, and here, in our tents, is Oriental hospitality besides; buy and eat, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our own countrymen, exploring the deserts of Australia even now, would understand it well. Many a brave man has sunk down there and died. One band of early explorers survived to tell how in their extremity they climbed a hill and saw below them a rolling water, right into which with one consent they rushed, and eagerly drank, only to find that it was salt as brine. O mockery, like the mockery of earthly pleasure when the heart is athirst! II. GOD CALLS THE DISAPPOINTED, the fevered, the men and women who have found the world desolate and dry; whose very wishes give them not their wish, who succeed perhaps, and are all the more unhappy because they know that success also is vanity; whose affection prospers, only to teach them that, after all, there are depths in every heart which resound to no human voice. You may not as yet feel any more than this burning, secret want; but this is enough, if only it leads you to the fountain. Does not the very word "come" imply the leaving of something, as well as approach to something else? And this purchasing is not entirely defined in the words, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," for much more than sin must be surrendered. St. Paul tells us of the price he himself paid when, having reckoned

up his advantages, and how, as touching the righteousness that is by the law, he was blameless, he adds, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," etc. Yes, for Christ. For it is He who interprets this verse of Himself, though it is plainly spoken of Jehovah. He, on the great day of the feast, stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Here, then, is the one test of earnestness: Will you, at the bidding of your God, renounce what has failed to quench your thirst, for the sake of the waters of life? (*G. A. Chadwick, D.D.*) *The great proclamation:*—I. To WHOM THIS OFFER IS MADE. It is to every one thirsty and penniless. That is a melancholy combination, to be needing something infinitely, and to have not a farthing to get it with. But that is the condition in which we all stand, in regard of the highest and best things. 1. "Every one that thirsteth." That means desire. But it means need also. And what is every man but a great bundle of yearnings and necessities? There are thirsts which infallibly point to their true objects. If a man is hungry, he knows that it is food that he wants. We have social instincts; we need love; we need friendship; we need somebody to lean upon; we thirst for some breast to rest our heads upon, for hands to clasp ours; and we know where the creatures and the objects are that will satisfy these desires. And there are higher thirsts of the spirit, and a man knows where and how to gratify the impulse that drives him to seek after some forms of knowledge and wisdom. But besides all these there come in a whole set of other thirsts that do not in themselves carry the intimation of the place where they can be slaked. And so you get men restless, dissatisfied, feeling that there is something wanting, yet not knowing what. You remember the old story in the "Arabian Nights," of the man who had a grand palace, and lived in it quite contentedly, until somebody told him that he needed a roc's egg hanging from the roof to make it complete, and he did not know where to get that, and was miserable accordingly. We build our houses, we fancy that we are satisfied; and then there comes the stinging thought that it is not all complete yet, and we go groping in the dark, to find out what it is. Do you know what it is that you want? It is God! Nothing else, nothing less. There are dormant thirsts. It is no proof of superiority that a savage has fewer wants than you and I have, for the want is the open mouth into which supply comes. And it is no proof that you have not, deep in your nature, desires which unless they are awakened and settled, you will never be blessed, that these desires are all unconscious to yourselves. And yet there are no desires—that is to say, consciousness of necessities—so dormant but that their being ungratified makes a man restless. You do not want forgiveness, but you will never be happy till you get it. You do not want to be good and true and holy men, but you will never be blessed till you are. You do not want God, but you will be restless till you find Him. 2. "And he that hath no money." Who has any? Notice that the persons represented in our text as penniless are, in the next verse, remonstrated with for spending "money." So then the penniless man had some pence away in some corner of his pocket which he could spend. He had the money that would buy shams, "that which is not bread," but he had no money for the true thing. Which, being translated out of parable into fact, is simply this, that our efforts may win, and do win, for us the lower satisfactions which meet the transitory and superficial necessities, but that no effort of ours can secure for us the loftier blessings which slake the diviner thirsts of immortal souls. II. In WHAT IT CONSISTS. They tell an old story about the rejoicings at the coronation of some great king, when there was set up in the market-place a triple fountain, from each of whose three lips flowed a different kind of rare liquor which any man who chose to bring a pitcher might fill from, at his choice. Notice my text, "come ye to the waters" . . . "buy wine and milk." The great fountain is set up in the market-place of the world, and every man may come; and whichever of this glorious trinity of effluents he needs most, there his lip may glue itself and there it may drink, be it "water" that refreshes, or "wine" that gladdens, or "milk" that nourishes. They are all contained in this one great gift that flows out from the deep heart of God to the thirsty lips of parched humanity. And what does that mean? We may say salvation; or we may use many other words to define the nature of the gifts. I venture to take a shorter one, and say, it means Christ. He is the all-sufficient supply of every thirst of every human soul. III. How DO WE GET THE GIFTS? The paradox of my text needs little explanation. "Buy without money and without price." The contradiction on the surface is but intended to make emphatic this blessed truth that the only conditions are a sense of need and a willingness to take—nothing else and nothing more. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Soul thirst:—Men know what bodily hunger is, some have felt it to an agony, but there is a soul hunger far more distressing than this. It is depicted on the countenances of those whose bodies fare sumptuously every day. Men also know what bodily thirst is. But there is a soul thirst infinitely worse than that which was ever felt by the most parched of Oriental travellers. That all unregenerate souls are thirsting, with more or less intensity, for that which they have not, will neither be debated nor denied. Christianity is a provision for such, and as a provision it is marked by three things. I. It is EFFICACIOUS. It is "water." The Gospel is to the thirsty soul what the cool refreshing stream is to a thirsty body. It satisfies —1. The guilty conscience, 2. The longing heart, 3. The worshipping spirit of man. All who have truly received the Gospel give this testimony. II. It IS GRATUITOUS. "Without money and without price." Water is one of the freest things in the world. It is a ubiquitous element; it not only floats in the cloud, descends in the showers, and rolls in the rivers, but bubbles up at our feet and oozes out in all the things around us. III. It IS UNRESTRICTED. "Ho, every one that thirsteth." The Gospel is not for any type of mind, any class of character, any condition of society, any tribe of men. Like the light of heaven, it is for all. (*Homilist.*) *The spiritual appetite and its gratification*:—I. The spiritual appetite. 1. It results from the constitution of our nature. We cannot go deeper than nature. We cannot go behind or beyond it, for nature is what has been born (Latin *natura*), born out of God's thought by God's power. When we speak of nature we must pass in thought from her to her parent God, and find a sufficient answer to all questions and difficulties by saying: "God has so willed it, therefore it is as it is." All the strong basal instincts of human nature must be traced back to the make of our moral being as it was planned by almighty wisdom, and wrought by infinite power. We hunger and thirst, because our physical nature has been so created that it must needs go out of itself for its supplies of nutriment. Similarly, God made our souls for Himself. Deep within us, He has put necessities and desires, that crave for satisfaction from the Unseen, Eternal, and Divine. 2. It produces pain. There are many sources of pain; but perhaps primarily God has instituted it to compel us to take measures for our health and salvation. The pain of hunger and thirst is designed to force us to take food, without which the body would become exhausted and die. So, in the moral sphere, we should be thankful when we are discontented with ourselves, when in self-abhorrence we cry out for God's unsullied righteousness, when we go about smitten with infinite unrest. 3. It is universal. As we have never met man or woman incapable of hunger or thirst, so there is no human soul which is not capable of possessing God, and does not need Him for a complete life. Often the spiritual appetite is dormant. The invalid, who has long suffered under the pressure of a wasting illness, may have no appetite, but at any moment it may awake. Thus with the hunger of the soul for God. II. THE NURTURE OF SPIRITUAL APPETITE. III. THE CERTAIN GRATIFICATION OF THIS APPETITE. God never sends mouths, the old proverb says, but He sends with them the food to fill them. Young lions never seek that which His hand does not open to give. The fish, and the fly at which it snatches; the bird, and the berries on the hawthorn bush; the babe, and the milk stored in its mother's breast, are perfectly adapted to each other. Whatever you and I have longed for in our best and holiest moments may have its consummation and bliss, because God has prepared for our perfect satisfaction. (*Life of Faith.*) *A gracious invitation*:—I. THE STATE OF THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. II. THE NATURE OF THE PROVISION PREPARED. III. THE FORCE OF THE INVITATION OFFERED. What is it to come? coming signifies believing. Observe how this invitation is reiterated. It comes in with a shout; then it is plainly stated—then it is repeated—and a third time it is urged. 1. Let the extent of the call induce you to come. 2. Let the freeness of the supply induce you to come. 3. Let the sufficiency of the provision induce you to come. 4. Let the impossibility of finding redemption elsewhere induce you to come. Conclusion: 1. Some of you have heard in a spirit of levity. 2. Some in a spirit of neglect. 3. Some in a spirit of doubt and despondency. (*J. Parsons.*) *Water for the thirsty*:—I. WHAT THESE WATERS ARE WHICH ARE PROVIDED FOR THIRSTY SINNERS. II. EVERY THIRSTY SINNER MAY AND OUGHT TO COME TO THEM. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *True satisfaction in Christ*:—There are eight things which thirsty sinners should set together. 1. All their sins and Christ's merits. 2. All their distresses and Christ's compassions. 3. All their wants and Christ's fulness. 4. All their unworthiness and Christ's freeness. 5. Their desires and Christ's invitations. 6. Their thirstings and the promises of Christ. 7. Their own weakness and Christ's strength. 8. Satan's objections and

Christ's answers. (*Ibid.*) *The best bargain*:—Dr. Faustus was very dear to legend in the Middle Ages. He burned with desire to drink his fill of all the pleasures of this life; but he could not gain them by his own unaided skill. He therefore made a contract with Satan. It was drawn out in the most lawyer-like style, and Faustus signed it with his own blood. It was stipulated that during the next twenty years he should have the run of all earth's pleasures, and then his soul and body were to be given over to Satan. He began with the sweets of knowledge, but soon he forsook them in disgust, and plunged into the fiercer and coarser excitements of the senses. Amid many horrors the body and soul of Faustus were seized by Satan just as the clock struck twelve at night on the last day of the specified period. These legends hold some of the most solemn secrets of life. They teach that every man has a soul to dispose of; that men, like the fallen angels, may ruin themselves with their eyes open; and that the greatest transactions of the soul may be likened to buying and bargaining. I. WHEN I BUY, I DESIRE. And I desire what I must fetch from without. Were I entirely self-supporting, had I everything I need "within myself," as the saying is, I should never go to any market. Isaiah's words for "buy" means to buy provisions. Lost in the desert, parched by thirst, gnawed by hunger, duped by the mirage, ready to perish—that is the standing biblical picture of a sinful man when he realizes his soul's needs. It is he who is urged to come to the waters, and to buy wine and milk. "But I have no heart, no desire for these things: what am I to do?" That is the great trouble; indifference or downright indolence of soul is the most common obstacle. But God's appeal is, "Come now, and let us reason together." He sets forth the alternatives as to a reasonable being. Water, wine, milk, good, fatness, life, covenant-mercy—all these are freely offered instead of starvation and death. How unreasonable you must be if anything on earth can keep you from what you know to be your highest good! II. WHEN I BUY, I CHOOSE. The essence of a bargain is an act of choice. Choose! the Bible keeps that word ever ringing in our ears. And so does profane literature. Hercules, the greatest hero of heathendom, was made by his deliberate choice of virtue and rejection of vice. Pythagoras put this great truth into one of the most popular of object-lessons. He compared life to the letter Y. The parting of the ways is symbolized by the two limbs of the letter. A man must go forward; and he must go left or right; he must walk in the way of evil or in the way of good. This choosing is the biggest thing you can do in this world. When I buy I consent to the price. Buying is simply avowed consent in action. "Come buy . . . without money and without price." By this double phrase the prophet assails the deep-seated self-righteousness of the heart. And he assails it with its own favourite ideas and phrases. You will buy. Well, then, let him buy who has no money, and let him buy without money and without price. Buying has a legal suggestion; but buying without money more than neutralizes every such suggestion. The most capacious mind, the liveliest imagination, could not suggest a more effective way of setting forth the utter freeness of God's grace. III. WHAT I BUY, I OWN. The Gospel is here stated in the language of the market-place, so that all may perfectly understand it. All just laws and our moral instincts make me the undoubted possessor of that which I have fairly bought and paid for. It is my very own. This buying is all you need. The goods are yours in offer; and they are yours in full possession if you accept them. IV. WHAT I BUY, I USE. Unused milk and flesh are of no value to me. The bread of life, which Christ is and offers, is ours only in so far as we appropriate and assimilate it. "Buy and eat." The buying is useless without the eating. Eating is the most vital, personal, and experimental thing in the world. The bread eaten becomes part and parcel of myself. (*Monthly Visitor.*) *The proclamation and expostulation of mercy*:—I. THE PROCLAMATION OF MERCY. 1. The blessings offered. (1) "Waters." Men need cleansing and refreshing. The word is "waters," not water. Some waters are good for domestic purposes only, others for medicinal purposes, and others again for purposes of cleansing. Thus, the water that may be suitable for one purpose may be unsuitable for other purposes. Not so the blessings of the Gospel; not so Christ, who is the Gospel. He meets all the needs of the soul. He pleases the imagination, satisfies the affections, calms the conscience, purifies the heart. (2) "Wine." Christ is like wine, in that He gladdens the heart. He is unlike wine in this—while we may have too much wine, we can never have too much of Christ. (3) "Milk." Milk is nourishing food; milk is natural food. A taste for milk is possibly the only taste we have by nature. All our other likings are more or less acquired. But, we refuse Christ, because what we popularly call a state of nature, is not a state of nature. To live naturally we must feed naturally.

He only so lives who feeds on Christ. 2. The terms propounded. (1) We must "thirst" for Christ. We shall be blessed as soon as we wish to be. We are welcome to Christ when He is welcome to us. (2) We must come to Christ. II. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS which accrue from compliance with these conditions. Men are invited to buy, etc., so, of those who comply it may be said—1. They "buy" soul-food, *i. e.* they appropriate as verily their own the blessings purchased by Christ. 2. They "eat," *i. e.* they have experimental knowledge of Christianity. 3. Their soul "delights itself in fatness." The more of Christ men have, the more they desire. III. THE LORD'S GRACIOUS EXPOSTULATION. It is an appeal to their reason and their experience. God knows what man is, and what he feels. It is as if God had said: "I know your case entirely; you are toiling for happiness and toiling in vain, and you know it. You are always pursuing some ideal good, with which, when you get it, you are satiated. Why go on thus, when peace and rest may be had?" The argument used by God teaches that sin is—1. Costly. "Wherefore do ye spend money?" etc. Sin is costly in—(1) A pecuniary sense. (2) A mental sense. (3) A moral sense. (4) A spiritual sense. It costs money, health, mental quiet, character, heaven. 2. Laborious. (1) Men labour to accomplish their evil purposes. (2) Men labour to conceal their evil deeds, etc. 3. Unsatisfying. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Invitation; expostulation; entreaty:*—I. AN EVANGELICAL INVITATION. "Come ye." 1. The persons invited. 2. The matter of the invitation. Jesus Christ is an only good, and He is an universal good. "Waters; bread; milk; wine." 3. The manner of the invitation. (1) Earnest. "Ho!" (2) Serious. "Come, come, come; buy, buy." (3) General. "Every one." (4) Gracious. "Buy wine and milk, without money and without price." There is much good to be had, and at a very easy rate. Jesus Christ, and the things of Christ, are above price and without price. II. A COMPLAINING EXPOSTULATION. "Wherefore," etc. Here we have charged on sinners—1. Their neglect. 2. Their folly. III. A RENEWED SOLICITATION OR ENTREATY. How patient is God, even to sinners who neglect the offers of His grace! This renewed entreaty is—1. Very vehement. "Hearken diligently; incline your ears; hear." 2. Very persuasive. 3. Very satisfactory. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you," etc. "I will give My bond for it; all this shall be as surely made good as the mercies which I performed to My servant, David." (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Food a supreme need:*—What does the hungry man want? Money? Not at all. Fame? No. Good clothes? Not a bit. He wants food. What does the thirsty man want? Reputation? Bonds and stocks? No! He wants water. When we are dead in earnest, and want the bread of heaven and the water of life, we shall not stop till we get them. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) **He that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat.**—*Buying without money:*—We have before us the figure of a merchant selling his wares, and crying like a chapman in the market, "Ho!" To attract attention he calls aloud, "Come! Come! Come!" three several times; and he adds to this the cry of "Buy! Buy!" Shall the Great King thus liken Himself to a trader in the market earnest to dispose of his goods? It is even so, and I therefore call upon you to admire the mercy of the Lord. In the fifty-third and fifty-fourth chapters this Divine Merchantman has been spreading out His wares. What treasures they are! I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE BUYER. It is the portrait of a poor, penniless, broken-down creature reduced to the extremity of want: "He that hath no money." Of course, by this is meant the man who literally has no money. Having nothing, you may yet possess all things. But we understand the reference of the text to be mainly spiritual, and so the portrait here is that of a man who has no spiritual money, no gold of goodness, no silver of sanctity. 1. His fancied stock of natural innocence is spent. 2. He thought that he had accumulated some little savings of good works; but his imaginary righteousness turns out to be counterfeit. 3. He is in a still worse plight, for he is also too poor to get anything; the procuring power is gone, for he has "no money;" that is to say, nothing wherewith he can procure those good things which are necessary to salvation and eternal life. 4. Moreover, his stock with which to trade is gone. Money makes money, and he that has a little to begin with may soon have more; but this man, having no stock to start with, cannot hope to be rich towards God in and by himself. No money! (1) Then, he cannot pay his old debts. His sins rise up before him, but he cannot make amends for them. (2) Moreover, he cannot meet his present expenses. (3) He cannot face the future. (4) The only hope for a man who has no money must be outside himself. II. THE SELECTION OF THE BUYER. It is a strange choice, and it leads to a singular invitation, "He that hath no money; come, buy, and eat." What is the reason? 1. These need mercy most.

2. This character is chosen because he is such a one as will exhibit in his own person the power of Divine grace. 3. The Lord Jesus delights to make evident the freeness of His grace. 4. He is the kind of man that will listen. A wretched sinner jumps at mercy like a hungry fish leaping at the bait. 5. Such an empty, penniless soul, when he does get mercy, will prize it and praise it. He that has been shut up in the dark for years values the light of the sun. He that has been a prisoner for months, how happy he is when the prison doors are opened, and he is at liberty again! Let a man once get Christ, who has bitterly known and felt his need of Him, and he will prize Him beyond all things. III. THE INVITATION. The man who has no money is to come, buy, and eat. It looks odd to tell a penniless man to come and buy, does it not? and yet what other word could be used? Come and buy, has a meaning of its own not to be otherwise expressed. In buying there are three or four stages. 1. Desiring to have the thing which is exhibited. 2. This means next, to agree to terms. 3. When the terms are carried out, the buyer appropriates the goods to himself. 4. But the text says, "Buy, and eat," as much as to say, make it yours in the most complete sense. If a man buys a loaf of bread it is his: but if he eats it, then all the lawyers in the world cannot dispute him out of it—he has it by a possession which is not only nine points of the law, but all the law. Christ fed upon is ours beyond all question. IV. By way of ASSURANCE, to show that this is all real and true, and no make-believe. 1. It is not God's way to mock men. He hath Himself declared, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye My face in vain." 2. God is under no necessity to sell His benefits. He is not impoverished: He is so rich that none can add anything to His wealth. 3. There is no adequate price that we could bring to God for His mercy. 4. Remember that Jesus must be meant for sinners, for if sinners had not existed there never would have been a saviour. 5. It must be true that God will give these blessings to men who have no merits, and will bestow them as gifts, because Jesus Himself is a gift. 6. Beside that, Christ is all. 7. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is blessedly free from all clogging conditions, because all supposed conditions are supplied in Christ Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Gospel blessings to be bought:*—You may have seen persons in a shop who, when they have been shown almost all the contents of the shop,—when article after article has been brought down from the shelves for their inspection, have at last, to the no small disappointment of the shopkeeper, gone out without buying anything. And we who have the Gospel wares to dispose of, are subject to like disappointments. We also have customers who, when they have looked at, and turned over, so to speak, again and again, the goods which we offer them, as though they would make an offer for them, content themselves with the looking at them, hear and listen to the Gospel, that you would think they were going to embrace it, yet go out of Church, ah! and out of the world, without embracing it. (*W. Cleaves, M.A.*) *Buyers will show that they possess:*—It will be seen whether we have been indeed buyers, or like those who content themselves with looking at what is to be sold without buying. If a man has been buying clothes, for instance, he will be seen wearing the clothes; if he has been buying cattle, he will stock his land with the cattle; if he has been buying provisions, his table will be supplied with the provisions; if he has been buying furniture, his house will be furnished with it; and if we have been buying of Christ, the heart and mind will be furnished, we shall be clothed, we shall be adorned with what Christ has for those who buy of Him. (*Ibid.*) *The fulness of Christ offered to the needy sinner:*—1. In Christ there is very good fare to be had for poor sinners. 2. The enjoyment of it is limited by their coming to Christ and buying of Him. 3. Upon their coming to Christ all that good doth certainly come to them. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Willingness to buy of Christ:*—He that is willing to buy—1. Will go to the market. 2. Doth like the wares which are to be bought. 3. Will come up to the price at which they are to be bought. 4. Will watch the time, and take the time of buying. 5. Is willing to sell that he may compass the things he is very desirous to buy (Gen. xlvii. 17–19; Matt. xiii. 44). There are three "alls" which a poor sinner is willing to sell that he may have Christ. (1) All his sinful lusts and his former sinful courses of life. (2) All his worldly estimations and advantages (Heb. xi. 24–26). (3) All his self. His self-wisdom, his self-will, his self-righteousness, his self-sufficiencies and his self-confidence, his self-seekings and his self-advantages (Phil. iii. 8). (*Ibid.*) *Buying of Christ:*—You may know that you have indeed bought of Christ by something in yourselves. 1. Your hearts will be much endeared to Christ for what He hath sold unto you. 2. You will spend what you have bought of Christ, upon Christ. 3. You will so like the bargain that Christ shall have your custom as long as you live. 4. You will not sell what you

have bought. (*Ibid.*) *Driving a trade with Christ*:—There are seven arguments to persuade poor sinners to come and buy of Christ. I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE WARES. II. THE NECESSITY OF THE PURCHASE. III. THE GOODNESS OF THE SELLER. IV. THE EASINESS OF THE PRICE. V. THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE MARKET. VI. THE BENEFIT OF THE BARGAIN. VII. THE LOSS BY NEGLECT. (*Ibid.*) *The benefit of trading with Christ*:—By buying of Christ you gain—1. Losses. It is no gain to lose a soul, yet it is an exceeding gain for a soul to lose some things—the dominion of sin, the love of sin, a condemning conscience, our corrupt vices, etc. 2. Yourselves. We never come to enjoy ourselves until we come to enjoy Christ. 3. Your own souls—they are safe and secured for ever. 4. All. All the purchase of Christ, all the good of all the offers of Christ, all the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, all the promises of God in Christ, all the revealings of the ordinances of Christ, all the immunities and privileges of Christ, all the hopes by Christ. You gain all the good which concerns soul and body in this life, and all the good which concerns them in the life to come. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual merchandise*:—Those who have bought of Christ are—I. THE WISEST MERCHANTS. II. THE SUREST POSSESSORS. (*Ibid.*) "*Buy and eat*:"—It is a virtue here to be a holy glutton. (*J. Trapp.*) **Yea, come, buy wine and milk.**—*Wine and milk*:—As water, on account of its commonness and abundance, is often apt to be despised, the prophet farther speaks of the blessings of salvation under the symbols of wine and milk. (*R. Jones, M.A.*) *A free salvation*:—I. I have to preach WINE AND MILK. The Gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man, and the deeper he drinks into the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become. The Gospel is like milk too, for there is everything in it that you want. Do you want something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the Gospel—"a very present help in time of trouble." Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace all-sufficient for everything that God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something to light up the eye of your hope? There are joy-flashes in the Gospel that may make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss. Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the Gospel there is that that can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. The Gospel was evidently meant for manhood; it is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head; there is love for the heart; there is guidance for the foot. And I think there is another meaning in the two words "wine and milk." Wine is a rich thing, something that requires much time to manufacture. There has to be vintage and fermentation and preservation before wine can come to its full flavour. The Gospel is like that; it is an extraordinary thing for feast days; it gives a man power to use a vintage of thought, a fermentation of action, and a preservation of experience, till a man's piety comes forth like the sparkling wine that makes the heart leap with gladness. But milk is an ordinary thing; you get it every day, anywhere. So is it with the Gospel: it is a thing for every day. II. Having thus exhibited the article, my next business is to BRING THE BIDDERS UP TO THE AUCTION BOX AND SELL IT. My difficulty is to bring you down to my price. Here comes some one up to the sacred desk, transformed for the moment into an auction-box, and he cries, "I want to buy." What will you give for it? He holds out his hands, and he has such a handful; he has to lift up his very lap with more, for he can hardly hold all his good works. He has Ave-Marias and Paternosters without number, and all kinds of crossings with holy water, and bendings of the knee, and prostrations before the altar, and reverence of the host, and attending at the mass, and so on. And so, Sir Romanist, you are coming to get salvation are you? and you have brought all this with you. I am sorry for thee, but thou must go away from the box with all thy performances, for it is "without money and without price," and until thou art prepared to come empty-handed thou canst never have it. Then another comes up and says, "I am glad you have served the Romanist like that. I hate the Church of Rome; I am a true Protestant, and desire to be saved." What have you brought, sir? "Oh I have brought no Ave-Marias, no Paternosters. But I say the collect every Sunday; I am very attentive to my prayers. I go to church almost as soon as the doors are open," or "I go to chapel three times on the Sabbath, and I attend the prayer-meetings; and beside that, I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound; I would not like to hurt anybody; I am always liberal, and assist the poor when I can. I may make a little slip just now and then. Still, if I am not saved I do not know who will be. I am as good as my neighbours, and I think I certainly ought to be saved, for I have very few sins, and what few there are do

not hurt other people; they hurt me more than any one else. Besides, they are mere trifles." I will send you away; there is no salvation for you, for it is "without money and without price;" and as long as you bring these fine good works of yours, you cannot have it. Mark, I do not find any fault with them, they are good enough in their place, but they won't do here, but they won't do at the judgment bar of God. Suppose I see a man building a house, and he were fool enough to lay the foundation with chimney-pots. If I should say, "My dear man, I do not like these chimney-pots to be put into the foundation," you would not say I found fault with the chimney-pots, but that I found fault with the man for putting them in the wrong place. So with good works and ceremonies; they will not do for a foundation. The foundation must be built of more solid stuff. But see another man. He is a long way off, and he says, "Sir, I am afraid to come; I could not come and make a bid for the salvation. Sir, I've got no larnin', I'm no scholard, I can't read a book, I wish I could. My children go to Sunday-school; I wish there was such a thing in my time; I can't read, and it's no use my hoping to go to heaven. I goes to church sometimes, but oh dear! it's no good; the man uses such long words I can't understand 'em, and I goes to chapel sometimes, but I can't make it out." It wants no scholarship to go to heaven. Now, I see a man come up to the stall, and he says, "Well, I will have salvation, sir; I have made in my will provisions for the building of a church or two, and a few almshouses; I always devote a part of my substance to the cause of God; I always receive the poor, and such-like; I have a pretty good share of money, and I take care not to hoard it up; I am generous and liberal. Won't that carry me to heaven?" Well, I like you very much, and I wish there were more of your sort. But if you bring these things as your hope of heaven, I must undeceive you. You cannot buy heaven with gold. Why, they pave the streets up there with it. Wealth makes distinction on earth, but no distinction at the Cross of Christ. You must all come alike to the footstool of Jesus, or else not come at all. I knew a minister who told me he was once sent for to the dying bed of a woman who was very well to do in the world, and she said, "Mr. Baxter, do you think when I get to heaven Betsy my servant will be there?" "Well," he said, "I don't know much about you, but Betsy will be there; for if I know any one who is a pious girl, it is she." "Well," said the lady, "don't you think there will be a little distinction? for I never could find it in my heart to sit down with a girl of that sort; she has no taste, no education, and I could not endure it. I think there ought to be a little difference." "Ah! you need not trouble yourself, madam," he said, "there will be a great distinction between you and Betsy, if you die in the temper in which you now are; but the distinction will be on the wrong side; for you will see her in Abraham's bosom, but you yourself will be cast out. As long as you have such pride in your heart, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven." The highway is as much for the poor man as the rich man; so is the kingdom of heaven—"without money and without price." III. I have to use A FEW ARGUMENTS with you. 1. I would speak to you who never think about these things at all. 2. I have now the pleasing task of addressing men of another character. You do feel your need of a Saviour. Remember, Christ died for you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The desire to bring something to Christ:*—I dare say in this congregation I have a hundred different phases of this singular fatuity of man—the desire to bring something to Christ. "Oh," says one, "I would come to Christ, but I have been too great a sinner." Self again, sir, your being a great sinner has nothing to do with that. Christ is a great Saviour, and however great your sin, His mercy is greater than that. He invites you simply as a sinner. Another says, "Ah, but I do not feel it enough." Self again. He does not ask you about your feelings; He simply says, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "But, sir, I cannot pray." Self again. You are not to be saved by your prayers; you are to be saved by Christ, and your business is simply to look to Christ; He will help you to pray afterwards. "But," says another, "if I felt as So-and-so did." Self again. "Yes," you say, "I think He would receive anybody but me." Please, who gave you any leave to think at all in the matter? Does He not say, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out"? Give up thinking, and believe. Are your thoughts as God's thoughts? "But," says one, "I have sought Him, but I have not found Him." Can you truly say that you have come to Christ with nothing in your hand, and have looked alone to Him, and yet He has cast you away? Do you dare to say that? No: if God's Word be true, and you are true, you cannot say that. If you will come down to this price, and take Christ for nothing, just as He is, "without money and without price," you shall not find Him a hard Master. (*Ibid.*) "*Without money and without price:*—

I. THE SURPRISING NATURE OF THIS FACT, for it is very surprising to mankind to hear that salvation is "without money and without price." It is so surprising to them that the plainest terms cannot make them understand it; and, though you tell them a thousand times a day, yet they persist in thinking that you mean something else. Why is it when man does see it he is surprised at it? 1. Because of man's relation to God, and his wrong judgment of Him. Man thinks that God is a hard master. 2. No doubt, also, the condition of man under the fall makes it more difficult for him to comprehend that the gifts of God are "without money and without price," for he finds that he is doomed to toil for almost everything he needs. 3. Again, man recollects the general rule of men towards each other, for in this world what is to be had for nothing except that which is worth nothing? 4. Another matter helps man into this difficulty, namely, his natural pride. He does not like to be a pauper before God. 5. Once more, all religions that ever have been in the world of man's making teach that the gifts of God are to be purchased or merited. Though I have thus shown grounds for our surprise, yet if men would think a little they might not be quite so unbelievingly amazed as they are; for, after all, the best blessings we have come to us freely. What price have you paid for your lives? and yet they are very precious. What price do you pay for the air you breathe? What price does a man pay for the sunlight? Life and air and light come to us "without money and without price." And our faculties, too—who pays for eyesight? The ear which hears the song of the bird at dawn, what price is given for it? The senses are freely bestowed on us by God, and so is the sleep which rests them. It is clear then that some of the best blessings we possess come to us by the way of free gift; and come to the undeserving, too, for the dew shall sparkle to-morrow upon the grass in the miser's field, and the rain shall fall in due season upon the rising corn of the wretch who blasphemes his God. II. THE NECESSITY OF THE FACT mentioned in our text. 1. From the character of the Donor. It is God that gives. Would you have Him sell His pardons? 2. Because of the value of the boon. As one has well said, "it is without price because it is priceless." 3. From the extremity of human destitution. The blessings of grace must be given "without money and without price," for we have no money or price to bring. III. THE SALUTARY INFLUENCE OF THIS FACT. If it be "without money and without price," what then? 1. That enables us to preach the gospel to every creature. 2. This fact has the salutary effect of excluding all pride. If it be "without money and without price," you rich people have not a halfpennyworth of advantage above the poorest of the poor in this matter. 3. It forbids despair. 4. It inspires with gratitude, and that gratitude becomes the basis of holiness. 5. It engenders in the soul the generous virtues. The man who is saved for nothing feels first with regard to his fellow-men that he must deal lovingly with them. Has God forgiven me? Then I can freely forgive those who have trespassed against me. He longs to see others saved, and therefore he lays himself out to bring them to Jesus Christ. If he had bought his salvation I dare say he might be proud of it, and wish to keep it to himself. Then the free gifts of grace, working by the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, create in us the generous virtues towards God. 6. I cannot think of anything that will make more devout worshippers in heaven than this. (*Ibid.*) "*Come:*"—Linger not, loiter not, frame not excuse, strain not courtesy, hang not off by a sinful bashfulness: it is good manners to fall to your meat. (*J. Trapp.*) "*Without money and without price:*"—1. This gracious way of a sinner's full enjoyment of Christ stands not in opposition to praying, attendance upon the ministry of the Word, or believing. 2. This is to be understood in an opposition to the price and value of our works. You can lay down nothing that hath merit or recompense in it; that hath answerable value, or any value in it. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Christ's gracious terms:*—All that poor sinners need may be bought of Christ upon gracious terms. Six things demonstrate it. 1. The sinner's insufficiency. 2. His unworthiness. 3. The inconsistency of any other way of trading with Christ (Rom. iv. 4, xi. 6). 4. The invaluableness of the commodities. 5. The quality of the contract. "Ask." "Believe." 6. The work of the Seller. (1) He is to find all that poor sinners need. (2) Upon His own proper costs and charge. (3) He is to give all to them. (*Ibid.*) *Trying to buy salvation:*—Mr. Webb-Peploe tells of a wealthy man whom he had never known to give five farthings a year in charity, who sent for him once when ill with paralysis. The man said to the minister, "I am afraid I may die. I have sent for you that I may do what is right before God; I want to go to heaven, and I want you to take a hundred pounds for the poor." The man of God looked the sinner straight in the face and said, "Do you think you are going to buy your

soul's way to glory with a dirty hundred pounds? Give your money where you like, I will not touch it." That was bitter medicine, but some diseases require sharp treatment. The man lived, and learned that salvation is not to be bought with money. (*Christian Budget.*) "*Without money and without price:*—Roland Hill was once preaching at a fair within earshot of the rival gongs of the vagrant merchantmen. Pointing to them, he said, "They and I are both offering goods for sale. But their difficulty is to get you up to their price; my difficulty is to get you down to mine. I offer you goods without money and without price." (*Ibid.*) *Too valuable to be bought:*—Zeuxis gave his pictures to his native city for nothing, because they were too good to be bought with gold. To offer money for them was to undervalue them. Can I buy pardon with anything I can call mine? (*Ibid.*) *No coinage can buy spiritual good:*—A man lands in a far country with English shillings in his pocket, but he finds that no coins go there but thalers, or francs, or dollars, or the like; and his money is only current in his own land, and he has got to get it changed before he can make his purchases. So with a pocketful of it he may as well be penniless. And, in like fashion, you and I, with all our strenuous efforts, which we are bound to make and which there is joy in making, after these lower things that correspond to our efforts, find that we have no coinage that will buy the good things of the kingdom of heaven, without which we faint and die. (*A. Maclaran, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **Wherefore do ye spend money.**—*Weighing money:*—In the first clause there is reference to the primitive custom of weighing instead of counting money, from which have arisen several of the most familiar denominations, such as the Hebrew "shekel," the Greek "talent," the French "livre," and the English "pound." The essential idea is that of paying. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The folly of man as a worker:*—I. HERE IS THE RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT MAN IS A VOLUNTARY WORKER. The appeal implies that he is free both in the expenditure of his "money" and the prosecution of his "labour." Every part of the universe works, but man only is a free worker. He works, not as material bodies work, by an outward force, nor as brutes, by blind impulses, but by his own deliberate purpose,—by choice and plan. There are at least four considerations which bind, with indissoluble bonds, our faith to the doctrine of man's voluntary action. 1. It is not impossible for the Almighty to create a being that shall be wholly free in action. 2. There is an antecedent probability that He would create such a being. A creature endowed with this independency of action would of all creatures be most like Himself, most fitted to show forth His glory. And as He created the universe for the manifestation of Himself, would it not be probable that, having the power to do so, He would create beings of a type that should most fully reflect Himself? "How would it now look to you," says the philosophic Saxon, King Alfred, "if there were any very powerful king, and he had no freemen in all his kingdom, but that all were slaves?" "Then," said I, "it would be thought by me neither right nor reasonable if men that were in a servile condition only, should attend upon him." "Then," quoth he, "it would be more unnatural if God, in all His kingdom, had no free creature under his power." Therefore, He made two rational creatures, free angels and men, and gave them the great gift of freedom. 3. The mental constitution of man seems to provide for this freedom of action. Man is so formed that he always acts from purpose. 4. The consciousness of universal man attests the fact of human freedom. II. HERE IS THE RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT MAN AS A VOLUNTARY WORKER SHOULD AIM AT THE ATTAINMENT OF MORALLY STRENGTHENING AND SATISFYING GOOD. What is the moral bread? Ask first what is the strength of the soul,—the moral stamina? Godliness. Where is the "bread" which both strengthens and satisfies the soul? Christ says, "I am the Bread of life." III. HERE IS THE RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT MAN, AS A VOLUNTARY WORKER, FREQUENTLY MISAPPLIES HIS POWER. He spends his "money" for that which is not "bread," and his labour for that which "satisfieth not." What is it to expend your property and labour in vain? 1. To strive after power as the chief end is to do so. 2. To strive after wealth as the chief end is to do so. 3. To strive after knowledge as the chief end is to do so. Neither scientific ideas, nor poetic creations, nor artistic embellishments are bread. 4. To strive after happiness as the chief end, is to do so. From this subject we may infer—(1) The immense amount of waste human labour that is constantly going on in the world. (2) The well-being of man consists not in the form of his labour, but in the principle that inspires and controls it. (3) The exquisite fitness of Christianity to man's condition. (*Homilist.*)

Folly and Wisdom:—I. A FOOLISH COURSE TO BE AVOIDED. II. A WISE METHOD TO BE PURSUED. (*R. W. Pritchard, Ph.D.*) *God's provision for man's need:*—What is man's way of meeting this great need? Spending money and labour for that which does not satisfy; in other words, using every means he can command, save the only right and true means, to satisfy the cravings of his immortal nature; a course that will prove fatal to his deathless interests if persisted in. But God meets him and—I. CHALLENGES THIS FATAL ERROR. "Wherefore do ye spend money," etc. The "wherefore" of the text implies three things on the part of God,—benign condescension; surprise; and gentle chiding. True life is impossible where the bread of life is not eaten. 1. Observation proves this. 2. Experience sustains the same truth. 3. History illustrates the same fact. 4. The Bible affirms the same doctrine. II. MEN WHO SEEK THESE THINGS AS THE HIGHEST GOOD ARE IN A STATE OF CONSTANT HUNGER AND UNREST. It is not bread, it does not "satisfy." III. GOD'S PLAN OF MEETING THE SOUL'S TRUE WANTS. Three terms are used of similar import, and that are of first importance to us, if we would put ourselves into harmony with the plan of God in relation to our good, "Hearken," "hear," and "incline your ear." These terms imply humility, docility and reverent attention. 1. God credits man with the capacity to receive and obey His communications. 2. God speaks to man, revealing His will, unfolding His way of meeting the deepest needs of our nature. 3. These Divine communications relate to our highest good. "Eat ye that which is good." 4. These provisions are richly abundant. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." "Delight" and "fatness" are two very prolific words and supply the fancy with almost boundless range. 5. There is life through obedience to the Divine plan. "Hear, and your soul shall live." 6. The blessings God offers are lasting as they are excellent. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you," etc. "An everlasting covenant" points to God's unchangeableness, and to His being ever ready to redeem all the pledges of His love and mercy. What should be the soul's attitude towards God while He makes these rich communications? "Hearken diligently," "Incline your ear," "Come unto Me." How striking the order! The attention is first arrested, then absorbed, then the soul draws near to God with profound interest in the revelation, ready to take the offered grace. (*J. Higgins.*) *The false and true in pleasure:*—I. THE FALSE. 1. The false is expensive. All false pleasure is sought from one or other of the following sources—sensual gratification, secular wealth, or popular fame—each very expensive. They cost what is infinitely more precious than gold—time, energy, moral peace, mental independency, and frequently health. 2. The false is not sustaining: it is not "bread." Were it obtained, it would not strengthen. It does not give mental strength: sensuality enervates the intellect. The love of gain makes man a tactician, not a thinker. The breath of mammon is poison to a free intellect, and the love of fame fills the mind with the unhealthy sentiment of vanity; nor does it give spiritual strength—strength to resist temptation—to bear trials—to help humanity—to serve God—to face death. It destroys this. 3. The false is not satisfactory. "Satisfieth not." II. THE TRUE. 1. True pleasure consists in spiritual communications from God. "Hearken diligently unto Me," etc. Three things are implied in this language:—(1) That God has made spiritual communications to man. This is a fact. They are the substance of the Bible. (2) That man has a capacity to appreciate these communications. A wonderful argument this for the native dignity of the soul. (3) That to appreciate these communications requires the most diligent study. The Bible is a difficult book, challenging the concentration of intellectual power. 2. That the pleasure thus derived is of the highest conceivable description (1) Essentially excellent—"good." (2) Abundantly sufficient—"delights itself in fatness." (3) Spiritually quickening—"your soul shall live." 3. That the continuation of this, the highest pleasure, is guaranteed by the solemn assurance of God. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with you." Here is a pledge of its perpetuity. If a promise is not fulfilled, it must be for one of three reasons: either that the author was insincere when it was made, or that he subsequently changed his mind, or lacked the necessary power to redeem the pledge. Neither of these suppositions is admissible; therefore, this true pleasure is everlasting. (*Homilist.*) *Food for the soul:*—1. Everything that has life must have food. 2. Man has the nature and wants of an animal. He also has a higher nature that takes hold of truth and God. He has, therefore, to care for a double life. 3. The text means that we put much into one side of life, hoping vainly for an equivalent of happiness on the other. The soul must have other food. 4. For this want there is a kind of borderland provision in Church forms. But religion cannot tarry in this borderland. 5. So we rise to the

truth that the soul's life is in God. (*H. W. Thomas, D.D.*) *Foolish neglect and fruitless labour*:—1. All the good that Christ doth offer, and all the gracious terms upon which He doth offer are sometimes slighted and refused by sinners. 2. Sinners are earnestly labouring and trading for vain and unprofitable things, when the great things of Christ are offered to them. 3. All the cost which men lay out, and all the pains which men do take for salvation from anything besides Christ, or in any other way than Christ's way, are utterly fruitless. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *The folly of pursuing that which does not satisfy*:—I. ALL OTHER THINGS BESIDES THOSE WHICH CHRIST DOTH OFFER, ARE VAIN AND UNPROFITABLE. II. SINNERS DO LABORIOUSLY PURSUE THEM, when yet Christ doth offer unto them the chiefest good for their souls. III. WHY SINNERS DO THIS. IV. THE EXTREME FOLLY OF THIS. (*Ibid.*) "*No bread*:"—The Hebrew term, "for that which is not bread," reads more correctly, "for that which is no-bread." It means that for which men spend their energies is "no-bread," it is the negative of bread; it is the very opposite of bread. It is that which not only does not alleviate our hunger, but makes us more hungry! It does not fill our emptiness, but makes us more empty than ever. Not only does it fail to satisfy, but it makes us more dissatisfied! Just as salt water not only fails to quench the thirst, but aggravates it. (*A. S. Gumbart.*) **Hearken diligently unto Me.**—*Hearkening and eating*:—Two thoughts are brought to our attention, as indicating the steps by which we bring ourselves into that blessed experience in which we may be conscious of having received the gift of God. 1. We must listen diligently. "Hearken diligently unto Me." That is, hearken with intense desire and eagerness. In the third verse God says: "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." This word "incline" is a strong word; it carries with it the idea of stretching the neck, as one anxiously, eagerly listening, or as a hound in pursuing game. 2. The second thing is, Eat. "Eat ye that which is good." (*A. S. Gumbart.*) *God's call should be heeded*:—There are six arguments which I would make use of to persuade you to embrace this counsel. 1. Christ offers you the best things—better things than the world can afford you. 2. Christ offers unto you the things that are best for you. 3. You may have these earthly things upon better terms if you could close with the things which Christ doth offer. 4. Christ alone is a portion, infinitely better than all the world alone. 5. You will lose Christ, and all these things of the world too, by neglecting Christ, and preferring before Him these things of the world. 6. You cannot drive both these trades together. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Hearkening*:—There are five things which that word doth denote. 1. A taking into our ears sounds, words, messages, reports, spoken unto us. 2. Sometimes to hear is the same with to understand. 3. Sometimes the same with to believe. 4. Sometimes to regard and approve. 5. Sometimes to obey, to follow what is said. (*Ibid.*) *Diligent hearkening to Christ*:—I. WHAT THIS DILIGENT HEARKENING TO CHRIST DOTH CONTAIN IN IT. He diligently hearkens to Christ. 1. Who doth carefully and regardfully observe Christ in His gracious offers. 2. Who seriously considers all the gracious offers of Christ. 3. Who judges highly of the offers of Christ. 4. Who obeys the voice of Christ. II. HOW IT MAY APPEAR THAT JESUS CHRIST IS EARNEST AND IMPORTUNATE WITH SINNERS, diligently to hearken unto Him. 1. By the gradations of His dealings with sinners. (1) He opens and proclaims the way of life and happiness to them (John xiv. 6). (2) He presents this salvation to them (Acts xiii. 26). (3) He encourages them to come from the certainty of all good, from the graciousness of His own terms—"Come, and buy without money;" and from the acceptance of their persons (John vi. 37). (4) He entreats them to hearken unto Him (2 Cor. v. 20). (5) He commands them authoritatively to obey His voice (1 John iii. 23). (6) He allures them with all sorts of promises. (7) He shows them the greatness and inevitableness of their danger, if they refuse to hearken (John viii. 24; Heb. ii. 3). (8) He expressly threatens a peremptory damnation, if sinners will not hearken (Mark xvi. 16). (9) He furnishes ambassadors with all sorts of gifts, to enable them to deal, and treat, and woo, and work on sinners to hearken. (10) He is content to pass by all the days of ignorance. (11) He lets a light into their minds which shows them a personal and absolute need of Himself. (12) He disproves, confutes and shames all the carnal arguments of sinners. (13) He affects the hearts and wills of sinners by many strivings of His Spirit. (14) He rouses the drowsy, careless sinner by outward special afflictions. (15) He breaks up the consciences of sinners, so that the terms of God fall on them. (16) He cuts off all their confidence in this distressed condition, so that no course shall ease or quiet or help. (17) He takes the opportunity, and, in this broken condition, sends messengers of hope and mercy to the sinner (Acts ix. 10, 11). (18) He answers all

the fears and doubts of sinners, both in respect of Himself (1 John ii. 1; Rev. iii. 20); and in respect of themselves—assuring them that neither the multitude of former sins nor abundance of present wants shall hinder mercy and salvation, if they will hearken and come. (19) He advances instances how sinners have fared by hearkening and coming to Him, *e. g.* the jailor, Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus (1 Tim. i. 16). (20) If none of these prevail with sinners to hearken, then doth Christ take His utter farewell of them with sighs and tears (Luke xix. 41, 42). 2. By the qualities of His voice. It is—(1) a plain voice, easy to be understood. (2) A high voice (John vii. 37). (3) Long and patient (Rom. x. 21). (4) In season and out of season. (5) Quick. To the ear, thence to the mind, thence to the conscience. (6) Expostulating. (7) Very pressing. III. WHY JESUS CHRIST IS SO IMPORTUNATE WITH SINNERS TO HEARKEN UNTO HIM. There are reasons for this: 1. In respect of sinners. (1) Because of their dulness and slowness. (2) Because sinners are careless. (3) Because they are very unteachable. (4) Because they are backward to hearken, and accept His gracious offers. (5) Because they are very perverse and desperate (Zech. vii. 11, 12; Acts vii. 51). 2. In respect of Christ Himself. (1) Because He is Christ, full of compassion. (2) Because He knows the condition of our souls: (*a*) their worth, (*b*) their lost condition, (*c*) the wrath which will certainly befall disobedient souls, (*d*) wherein real happiness lies, (*e*) the difficulty of gaining souls, (*f*) what power Satan hath with our souls. (*Ibid.*) **Eat ye that which is good.**—*Feeding on the Word:*—I. Here is FOOD. "Eat ye that which is good." 1. How is it presented to us? Freely. There was a word about buying; but that was soon covered up with, "Buy without money and without price." While it is thus presented freely as to any labour with which to procure it, it is also presented freely as to its quality, its highest quality. You are not permitted to drink freely of water, and then to purchase wine. The richest dainties of God's house are as free as the bread He gives to hungry souls. The only limitation is no limitation at all: "Ho, every one that thirsteth!" 2. What is this food? (1) The Word of God. (2) Better still, the incarnate Word of God. (3) The grace of God. 3. What is the nature of this food? It is in every sense of the word "good." It is satisfying. It is pure; no harm can ever come by eating it. This heavenly food is good for you at any time, good for you living, good for you dying. All other foods that men seek after are unsubstantial; they can surfeit, but they cannot satisfy; they can cloy, but they cannot content; but the food that has come down from heaven, if a man does but take it into himself, shall be the best food he ever ate. Moreover, this food is described here as being fatness. "Let thy soul delight itself in fatness." Within the Word of God, there are certain choicer truths; in Christ, there are certain choicer joys; in grace, there are certain choicer experiences than men at first realize. II. Here is FEEDING. One of the most important words in our text is that little word "eat." Food is of no use until it is eaten. You ought not to need any instruction on this point. We take a great many orphans into the Orphanage, and some of them are very ignorant, and we have to teach them a great many things; but we have no class for teaching them to eat. If men were hungry, they would know how to eat, if they had the bread. It is because men are not really hungry on account of sin that they come and ask us, "What do you mean by this eating?" Yet it may be that some are sincere in asking the question, so I will answer it. 1. To eat is to believe. 2. To eat is chiefly to appropriate. 3. The full process of eating includes digestion. How do I digest the Word of God? When I meditate upon it. 4. Feeding also means trusting yourself wholly to Christ. III. WELCOME. What does the Lord say? "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." 1. Here is no stint. It is not said, "Here is a pair of scales; here is a plate; here is a knife. The law allows so many ounces of meat to you, just so much, and you must not have half-an-ounce over." Nothing of the kind. You are just taken to the table, and the exhortation is, "Eat to your heart's content." 2. As there is no stint, so there is no reserve. It is not said, "Now you may eat those two things; but you must not touch that nice fat morsel over there; that is for the particular favourite, not for you." No, when God invites you to His table, you may have anything there is on the table. 3. So, too, there is no end to the feast. "Keep on delighting yourself in fatness. You will never use it all up." I read of a country once, though I hardly believed the description of it; for it was said that the grass grew faster than the cows could eat it. Well, there is a country that I know of, where the grass grows faster than the sheep can eat it. You may eat all you will out of the Divine Word; but you will find that there is more left than you have taken;

and it seems as if there were more after you had taken it, as if the grass grew deeper as you fed more ravenously upon it. IV. DELIGHT. 1. There is no peril in holy joy, in delighting yourself in God's Word, and delighting yourself in Christ. 2. There will be no idleness or selfishness produced by this fat feeding. 3. May you also attain a sense of holy security! 4. Then, may you come into a state of perfect rest! 5. May you also come into a state of complete resignation to the will of God! 6. May you be filled with a happy expectancy! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The soul's best food*:—I. THE REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION IN OUR TEXT: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." 1. The exceeding bountifulness of God in Christ Jesus. The invitation here given is in accordance with the character of the God who gives it. 2. The abundant provision that He has made for the supply of our needs. If any of you prepared a feast, it would be very grievous to you if your friends did not eat what you had provided. It is the very heart of God speaking in these words, and it is the provision of God's grace claiming to be consumed,—God's love pleading that what He has provided so bountifully should not be lost or wasted. 3. The Divine desire for fellowship. Almost always, when fellowship is spoken of in relation to God, expressions which concern eating are used. Fellowship begins, as it were, at the passover, at the eating of the lamb. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the offerings were not all burnt upon the altar; many of them were partaken of by both the offerer and the priest, and by God as represented by the devouring flame. So, when Jesus instituted that blessed memorial supper, He said to His disciples, concerning the bread, "Take, eat;" and, concerning the cup, "Drink ye all of it." When, in the Revelation, He said to the angel of the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," you know how He goes on to say, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." This appears to be God's favourite image to express fellowship. 4. Our exceeding great necessities. You must eat, so "eat ye that which is good." Your soul needs the best food, so "let your soul delight itself in fatness," in the fat and dainty morsels which the great God, who understands us even better than we understand ourselves, has so bountifully provided for us. 5. Our extreme foolishness. What a stupid animal man must be to need to be told to eat, and be urged to eat that which is good! The little lamb, in the meadow, has scarcely come into the world before it finds out where its mother's milk is, and very soon it begins to crop the tender herbage, and to find food for itself. Most creatures, by what we call instinct, discover their own natural food; but here is man, so foolish, so mad, so much more wild than the wild ass's colt, that he needs to be told to eat, spiritually. One part of human foolishness lies in the fact that we so often seek that which is not good for us, so that the Lord has to say to us, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" Man is described in Scripture as feeding upon ashes. It is not only that we are willing to eat that which is evil, but that we are unwilling to eat that which is good. Many persons will hear that which is good, and will even assent to our declaration that it is good; yet they do not eat it. What is spiritual eating? It is the inward reception of the truth of God into the soul. To hear the truth is, as it were, to see the bread. To think upon the truth is, as it were, to cut the bread, and put it on the plate. But this will never nourish any man; he must take the bread into his inward parts, and digest and assimilate it. There is this folly even about God's own children, that they do not eat that which is good according to the lavish, inexhaustible fulness provided by God. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." How very few minutes in a day most of us spend in feeding our souls! 6. Our fears. There is many a child of God, who longs for spiritual food, but he is afraid that he would be guilty of presumption if he ate it; so, when there is a very fat piece that is just going into his mouth, he says, "No, that cannot be for me," and he draws back from it. Just look at the text: "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." II. THE BENEFITS OF OBEYING THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT. 1. The pleasure of it. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." 2. The great preserving power of good spiritual food. It helps to keep us out of temptation. 3. Spiritual food comforts mourners. The analogy of this will be found in Neh. viii. 9, 10. It was of this that Mary sang, "He hath filled the hungry with good things." 4. It revives the fainting ones. 5. Spiritual eating is also a great strength for service. 6. It fits us to feed others. Ezekiel had to go and speak to the house of Israel in the name of the Lord; do you remember his preparation for that task,—the college to which he went? He saw a hand, which held a roll of a book, and a voice said to him, "Son of man, eat that

thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He cannot preach till he has eaten the roll. I believe that, in the courts of law, young men have to eat themselves into the profession; beside all other qualifications, they must eat a certain number of dinners before they can be fully certificated. It is a strange regulation with regard to earthly courts, but it is a right and proper thing in the courts of heaven. 7. It is the best mode of fellowship. Feed on the Word of God; especially feed on the Incarnate Word; otherwise, you cannot possibly enter into true spiritual fellowship with God. 8. Feeding upon the Word is the best way of promoting praise. You know how the 103rd Psalm begins: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Then, a little further on, the psalmist says, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." A hungry soul cannot sing well; the soul that best sings the praises of God is the one that has delighted itself with the fatness of the Divine provision. (*Ibid.*) "Fatness" in the Scriptures is used to denote the richest food (Gen. xxvii. 28–39; Job xxxvi. 16; Ps. lxv. 11), and hence is an emblem of the rich and abundant blessings resulting from the favour of God (Ps. xxxvi. 8; lxiii. 5). (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The path of life:*—Professor George Adam Smith talks about what he considers the greatest pathos of our life on earth—it is the fact that so many million souls are unconsciously starving right within reach of the food they need. They have only to stretch out their hands and take the bread of life, but their hands are glued to their sides. *An unsuitable diet:*—Some German women have fallen into the habit of "naschen," *i.e.* of nibbling comfits and cakes all day long. They carry "cornets" of bon-bons in their pockets, and nibble at them continually. No one wonders that they suffer greatly from disordered digestions, and become sallow, and irritable, and old before their time. And does not plain common-sense teach us that, when people feed their souls upon a diet of novels, or of gossip, or of frivolities of every kind, they must necessarily suffer from languor of spiritual life, debility of spiritual digestion, failure of vitality, and a creeping moral paralysis. (*Mrs. H. W. Smith.*)

Ver. 3. **Incline your ear.**—*God's voice:*—To incline your ear and hearken diligently unto God is to follow the Divine teachings as to the aims and methods of life. And God has a thousand voices for those who will hearken. 1. The voice of experience is His, and experience is loud and emphatic in assuring us that "if we live after the flesh we shall die; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body we shall live." 2. The voice in the heart and conscience is His, and if you will listen in the silence of the mind you will hear the sweet parental accents speaking to your deepest filial affection, and saying, "My son, give Me thine heart." 3. And the voice of inspiration is His, speaking through those who have seen most deeply into the Divine meaning of life, and the conclusion of the whole matter with them has been, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." 4. And the voice of Christ is the voice of God, and "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." (*C. Short, M.A.*) "*Incline your ear:*"—Hold it near the mouth of the gracious Speaker. Be willing to hear what God has to say. Take out that wool of prejudice that has prevented you from hearkening to God's voice. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Divine call and promise:*—The institution of public worship derives a peculiar value from its tendency to dispose men to listen to the voice of God. I. THE GRACIOUS PROPOSAL ON THE PART OF GOD. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you," etc. The covenant here proposed is a covenant of promise, that is, a covenant in which God promises to bestow freely upon His creatures a variety of the greatest and most necessary blessings. Two things here call for our attention—1. The extent here specified of the engagements of the covenant. "The sure mercies of David." This covenant was first discovered to Adam, more fully to Abraham, still more so to David, who was an eminent type of Christ. Now Christ, the spiritual David, is come; what these sure mercies are, we know more fully. But they are "sure mercies," which lead to—2. The ground of dependence. The covenant is founded upon the goodness of God. Think of the fidelity of His promises; of His ability; of the pledge He has given us. "He that spared not His own Son," etc. Think of the great cloud of witnesses who all testify to the Divine character, and speak the mercies to be sure. They are, therefore, "sure mercies." Sure to all who humbly apply for them without exception. Sure in the effects they produce. Sure in all changes. These never fail. Sure in another state of existence, for it is an everlasting covenant administered by an Eternal Being. II. THE MEANS OF OUR SECURING THESE SURE

MERCIES OF DAVID. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." 1. The Person speaking ought to induce attention. It is the Lord, our Maker, Preserver, Redeemer. 2. The interest we have in the subject ought to induce attention. 3. Our attention must lead us to God. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." 4. The amazing issues which depend on our obedience should lead us at once to obey. "Hear, and your soul shall live." (*J. Bolton, B.A.*) *God's own Gospel call:*—This very memorable chapter may be called God's own Gospel sermon. I. TWO SAVING PRECEPTS, which are pressed upon you. These are of simple character. 1. "Incline your ear." This is placed in another form, "Hearken diligently unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." You have ears to hear with, therefore hear. Consider and think upon eternal things. Think about Divine matters as God sets them before you. This attention, this hearkening, must be hearty, honest, continual, earnest and believing. 2. The second precept grows out of the first: "Come unto Me." "How can I come to God?" saith one. 1. Come, at least, by thinking much of Him. 2. Come, by your desires. 3. Come, by confession of sin. 4. Come, in humble, believing prayer. These are the two precepts—"Hear" and "Come." They are neither exacting nor unreasonable. II. To encourage you, and come to my second head, which deals with SAVING PROMISES. Here are two promises corresponding to the two precepts—1. "Your soul shall live." 2. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." (1) Observe, how He promises condescending intercourse. It is in the Hebrew, "I will cut a covenant." Covenants were made by cutting a victim in two, and they who made a covenant passed between the two halves of the sacrifice to make the covenant sure. The Lord, in effect, says, "Poor, wretched sinner, you that have not a penny to buy water with, if you will come to Me, I will enter into a sacred agreement and covenant with you." (2) God is ready to enter into a binding contract with you. (3) God will thus enter into an unending alliance with you. (4) We liken what He gives to the sinner to what He did to David (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). The covenant is all in Christ. III. Urge the Lord's own SAVING PLEAS. 1. God Himself speaks to you. 2. Your day of mercy is not ended (ver. 6). 3. He is ready and willing to forgive the whole of your past offences (ver. 7). 4. Then comes in the great persuasive of the magnanimity of God (vers. 8, 9). 5. Hear how the Lord pleads the power of His Gospel (vers. 10, 11). Hearken to God's voice, and let it enter your heart; then it will quicken and save you as surely as the sun and the rain water the earth. 6. The Lord persuades men to come to Him by telling them of the joy they will obtain in coming (ver. 12). 7. He calls you to Him by the effectual nature of His work (ver. 13). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's call to the needy and sinful:*—I. AN INVITATION, addressed to us by Jehovah Himself, to hearken diligently unto Him, to incline our ear, and to come to Him. There is something peculiarly touching in the invitations of the Word of God, which, if men would but pause and reflect, could not fail to make an impression upon their hearts. "Hearken diligently unto Me," God says; "incline your ear." He would take you, as it were, each one separately by himself, and reason and counsel with you. The matters of which He would treat with you are too important to be handled in a crowd, too sacred to be discussed amid the noise and bustle of worldly avocations. The Lord will have sinners "come" to Him; He will have all distance annihilated between your souls and Him; He will have you brought into the closest relationship and communion with Himself; He will have you not only within hearing of His voice, but in His very embrace. II. THE REASONS FOR OUR CLOSING WITH THIS INVITATION are two, and each of them is very weighty. 1. You will be vast gainers if you follow the leadings of the Divine Spirit, and go into conference with God, and embrace His terms. "Your soul shall delight itself in fatness." "Your soul shall live." 2. To refuse the offer is to lose the soul. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Salvation through the ear:*—God hath ordained—as it were to cross the devil—that as death entered into the world through the ear, by our first parents listening to that old man-slayer, so should life enter into the soul by the same door. (*J. Trapp.*) Hear, and your soul shall live.—*The highest life:*—Life is more than mere existence; it is the natural, healthful, and joyous activity of every part of the being. It is eternal life. (*Christian Age.*) *The way to life:*—I. THE MESSAGE IMPLIED. When we are commanded to "hear," it is supposed that something is spoken: there is a voice which, in one way or other, addresses us. This is none else than the voice of Jehovah, the God of truth, the God of love, the God of all patience and consolation. He speaks to us in His good Word. II. THE REGARD WHICH THIS MESSAGE DEMANDS. "Hear." There can be no impropriety in understanding this literally;

and, in this view, it condemns such as do not hear the Gospel when it is brought to them, and they have the opportunity of hearing it. It also reproves such as only occasionally hear the Gospel. But more is meant by hearing, in the text, than your presence in the place where the Gospel is preached. 1. Hear with attention. Thus the expression is varied, both in this and the preceding verse: "Hearken diligently unto Me;" "incline your ear," as persons peculiarly and closely attentive. Some marks of inattention, under the sound of the Gospel, are obvious enough. But we cannot always judge of attention by outward appearances. Then, will you hear with attention, when you are deeply convinced of the truth of what you hear; when you feel its vast importance; when you are thoroughly satisfied that the word of the Gospel is indeed the Word of God. 2. Hear with affection. It is a great thing to love the Gospel. When the Gospel is heard affectionately, there is an earnest concern to enjoy its invaluable blessings: prejudice falls before it; there is a growing conformity to it. 3. Hear with believing application. 4. Hear with obedient compliance. This, indeed, is nearly allied to what has last been mentioned, yet it includes something farther. Thus it is said, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me:" not only believe that these blessings of salvation are adapted to your state, and ready for your reception, but apply to Him who has them to bestow. He is "the Author of eternal salvation;" to whom? "to all them that obey Him." 5. Hear with humble prayer. III. THE ADVANTAGE PROMISED. "Your soul shall live." Several things are here observable. 1. It is a personal advantage. Many advantages are relative and distant. Persons may attend to various means with a view to the good of others. But this advantage is personally your own. 2. It is a spiritual advantage. Your "soul." To benefit the body is something; to preserve its life, to maintain and to improve its health, are objects of real moment; but they sink into nothing compared with what relates to the soul. 3. It is a great advantage. "Your soul shall live." We all have some idea what life is, and we know how highly it is valued. This advantage must be of peculiar magnitude, as the soul is unspeakably more excellent than the body, and as eternity is of infinitely higher moment than the fleeting shadow of time. The life of the soul! What does it denote? What does it include? The commencement of the life of the soul is in regeneration. 4. It is a sure advantage. Application: 1. The message of the Gospel is brought to you. 2. What is the regard which you are giving to this message? 3. What is your experience of this advantage? (*T. Kidd.*)

Life in Christ:—I. WHAT LIFE THAT IS WHICH A SOUL SHALL HAVE BY COMING TO CHRIST. II. HOW IT MAY BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE SOUL SHALL LIVE THAT HEARS AND COMES TO CHRIST. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you.—*The covenant with Israel:*—Nothing is required on the part of Israel but hearing and coming and taking; through these, it becomes pervaded by new life, and Jehovah presents it with an everlasting covenant, namely, the unchangeable mercies of David. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Twelve covenant mercies:*—I. SAVING KNOWLEDGE (Jer. xxxi. 31–34). II. GOD'S LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART (ver. 33). III. FREE PARDON (end of ver. 34). IV. RECONCILIATION (Jer. xxxii. 38). V. TRUE GODLINESS (ver. 39). VI. CONTINUANCE IN GRACE (ver. 40). VII. CLEANSING (Ezek. xxxvi. 25). VIII. RENEWAL OF NATURE (ver. 26). IX. HOLY CONVERSATION (ver. 27). X. HAPPY SELF-LOATHING (ver. 31). XI. COMMUNION WITH GOD (Ezek. xxxvii. 26–28). XII. NEEDFUL CHASTISEMENT (Ps. lxxxix. 30). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's covenant:*—We should hear much less of the doubts and fears of Christians about their own acceptance, if they would think more of God and His act, His call, His promise and His covenant, than of their own unworthiness, which, indeed, is frankly assumed throughout. (*G. A. Chadwick, D.D.*)

The sure mercies of David.—"*The sure mercies of David:*"—*i. e.* the mercies (loving-kindnesses) irrevocably promised to David and his house (comp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Ps. xviii. 50, lxxxix. 28, 49), and the great promise to which all these passages point (2 Sam. vii. 8–16). The comparison of the everlasting covenant to these Davidic "mercies" cannot mean simply that the one is as sure as the other. It is identity rather than comparison that is implied, the idea being that the contents of the covenant are the same as the mercies promised to David, and that it will be the fulfilment of the hopes that clustered round the Davidic dynasty. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) "*The sure mercies of David:*"—What is this "everlasting covenant"? What are these "sure mercies of David"? Two sorts of authors deserve to be heard on this article, though on different accounts, the first for their ignorance and prejudice, the last for their knowledge and impartiality. The first are the Jews, who, in spite of their obstinate blindness, cannot help owning that these

words promise the advent of the Messiah. Rabbi David Kimchi gives this exposition of the words: "'The sure mercies of David,' that is, the Messiah, whom Ezekiel calls David, They shall dwell in the land that I have given them, they, and their children, and their children's children for ever; and My servant David shall be their prince for ever." The other authors, whom we ought to hear for their impartial knowledge, are the inspired writers, and particularly St. Paul, whose comment on this passage, which he gave at Antioch in Pisidia, determines its meaning. There, the apostle, having attested the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, affirms that the prophets had foretold that event; and, among other passages, which he alleged in proof of what he had advanced, quotes this, "I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Acts xiii. 34). (*J. Saurin.*) "*The sure mercies of David*":—The Gospel is the exhibition and the bestowment of all those blessings which were promised to David, as the type of Christ, and His forefathers according to the flesh. Those blessings are indeed unspeakably valuable; in them is the charter of our hope, and the record of our salvation. And this consideration above all adds value to them—they are "sure." 1. Sure, as respects the fountain from which they are derived, the love and compassion of the holy and eternal one. 2. Sure, as respects the intention of Him who proposes them to us. 3. Sure, because of the price at which they are offered. (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*)

Vers. 4–6. **Behold I have given Him for a Witness to the people.**—*Witness; Leader; Commander*:—1. Most modern authorities hold that the person spoken of in ver. 4. is the historical David, and that vers. 4, 5 institute a parallel between the position he occupied in the heathen world of his time and that which Israel shall occupy in the future; the thought expressed, therefore, is that the Messianic hope is transferred from the dynasty to the nation. The view is thus succinctly stated by Driver: "As David became ruler of subject nations (2 Sam. viii.), a knowledge of his religion, however imperfect, spread among them; thus he was a 'witness' to them. This position of David is idealized in Isa. xviii. 43 ('Thou makest me a head of nations; a people whom I have not known shall serve me'); and the position, as thus idealized, is here enlarged, and extended in a spiritual sense to Israel (ver. 5)." 2. Others think that the reference in ver. 4 is to the future Messianic king (who is called David in Jer. xxx. 9; Ezek. xxxiv. 23 f.), so that the two verses represent under two aspects the future greatness of Israel. 3. An intermediate position is taken by some, viz. that ver. 4 goes back to the promise made to David, but regards it as one destined to be fulfilled in the person of his Son, the Messiah. It is very difficult to decide between these conflicting explanations. The third view seems on the whole the best; the original covenant guarantees an endless dominion to the family of David, and after the restoration this will assume a spiritual character and expand into universal empire in the reign of the Messiah. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Christ a witness to the people*:—One who stood forth to bear solemn testimony in regard to God—to His law, and claims, and plans; and One who was therefore designated to be the Instructor, Guide, and Teacher of men. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Christ the Father's Witness*:—I. THE QUALIFICATIONS WHICH WERE REQUISITE. A witness is one who gives evidence, even at the expense of life. This has been so generally received as its meaning, that the original word "martyr" has been transferred to our own language, without any material alteration of its signification—not that every person who is willing to lay down his life, is therefore a true witness, but he cannot be a true witness without it. There are many qualifications requisite beside this, and we shall now examine how far they were possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. He must have been an eye-witness of the things He related. He came to bear testimony to things of which the world at large were entirely ignorant, and concerning which He could derive no information, except by being intimately conversant with them. But He who "came for a Witness, to bear witness unto the truth," could say, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." 2. But He might have possessed this and every other qualification without the willingness to communicate what He knew as an eye-witness. And herein is manifested the exceeding love of the three Persons in the Trinity, towards man. The Father sets Him forth as His gift to sinners—"Behold I have given Him." The Son, when before His unjust judge, declares, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power" for this particular work. 3. It is also required in a witness that He declare the

whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In Revelation, i. 5 we read—"Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness;" and in the third chapter He calls Himself "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." Hence it follows that His testimony must contain all needful truth: that natural religion is not sufficient—that as it is a testimony, it can be received only by faith, and no prerequisites are placed by God in the way of a sinner coming to Him. That whilst this testimony is before the mind, it does work effectually in all those who believe, *i. e.* receive it on testimony; and that, as it came from God, it is the imperative duty of all who hear, to believe it, and that God is just in condemning those who believe not. II. WHAT THAT TRUTH WAS TO WHICH HE BORE TESTIMONY. "I am come," says He, "a light into the world, that whosoever followeth Me should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." By this He means to say, that all the world was lying in darkness and the shadow of death, "alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts;" and it was to strike at the root of every false religion, and every garbled form of His own, that He puts Himself forth as the only Witness, who, from His perfect acquaintance with what He spoke, was qualified to teach those truths which mankind had so perverted. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ came to restore the true knowledge of God, and this He did by testifying, in the first place, to the character of the Father, that "God is love." 2. Having thus borne testimony to the Father, He proceeds to bear testimony to Himself. Of Himself He testified that He was the promised Messiah, and that, though man, He was also God. 3. The Lord Jesus likewise was a Witness in declaring that it was the belief of His word, received as a testimony, which should bring salvation. 4. We shall now examine what He says of Himself as being a King, and consequently having a kingdom in the world. Whether He has a kingdom or not in the world is a question we are competent to decide by our own observation of the characters we meet with in our passage through life. But if we can see no signs of it, we must suspend our judgments till we see what the end will be. If He has already established one, it will be an additional proof that He is a faithful and true Witness. Now when examined by Pilate, the question was expressly put by him to Jesus, "Art thou a king then?" to which in the most unequivocal manner He replied, "Thou sayest that I am a king." The nature of that kingdom He had as expressly borne testimony to—"My kingdom is not of this world; now is My kingdom not from hence." But He bore testimony to this fact not only on His trial before Pilate (though this is called the good confession, because he immediately after sealed it with His blood), but in the whole of His public ministry. III. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT. While Christ was in the world He bore witness to the truth, but when He went hence to the Father, the Spirit was commissioned to lead into all truth those whom He left behind, and they, by His inspiration, have committed it to writing. The Holy Scriptures are, therefore, the testimony of Christ, as it has been witnessed to us by the Spirit. Of this testimony, the whole world are ignorant by nature, and as soon as it is made known to them, the pride and carnal enmity of the unrenewed mind rises in opposition to it. This opposition to the truth of God, it is the especial province of the Spirit of God to overcome, and the way in which He effects this is by "taking of things," *i. e.* the testimony "of Christ, and showing them to us," and this He does in such a manner as commends to us, as most lovely, what we before thought most hateful. Many of the children of God are led into and kept in a state of doubt as to their acceptance with God, from thinking that the only witness which the Spirit bears is to the life and conversation, forgetting that these evidences can only flow from the primary witness which He bears to the testimony of Christ. This consideration will also show what it is so important to remember, the connection between soundness and clearness of doctrinal truth with consistency of life. (*R. Jessop, M.A.*)

Christ as a Witness:—Christ as a Witness is—I. MOST GLORIOUSLY COMMUNICATIVE. Some witnesses are so ignorant that they have but little to say, and others, though better informed, have but little to communicate of importance. What does Christ testify? 1. Of God. 2. Of man. (1) Man's spiritual existence. (2) Moral depravity. (3) Imminent danger. (4) Future retribution. 3. Of duty. He lived duty. 4. Of man's restoration. II. MOST UNQUESTIONABLY CREDIBLE. Witnesses are often incredible from two reasons. 1. Their ignorance. They are found to be so imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances of the case to which they testify, that their evidence is either received with suspicion, or rejected as worthless. But is Christ incredible on this ground? No. His knowledge is infinite. He knows all about everything of which He testifies. He knows God, man, the universe. 2. Untruthfulness. Many are placed in the witness-box who, though they have a com-

petent intelligence, have no inviolable attachment to truth. Their prevarication destroys the worth of their evidence. Infinitely removed is Christ from this. He is the Truth. Truth is dearer to Him than life. False witnesses abound; but here is One on whose testimony we may and ought to repose with unbounded trust. (*Homilist.*) *Christ given as a Witness:*—I. THE PECULIAR FITNESS, OR QUALIFICATIONS, OF JESUS, TO ACT AS A WITNESS FOR GOD TO THE PEOPLE. 1. Jesus was singularly qualified to act as a Witness to the people, because of His being acquainted with the whole counsel of God: whilst His own mind as the Son was in perfect accordance with that of His Father. 2. Jesus was specially qualified to act as a Witness, because of His necessary freedom from all temptation to suppress or mistake any part of the truth. He was from time to time knowingly putting Himself into situations, and bearing testimony to such views, as were prejudicial to His safety, and endangering His life. 3. Jesus was specially qualified to be a Witness for God to the people, because of His alliance with both in His nature, together with His zeal for God's glory and the good of men. In matters where ordinary witness-bearing is required, the interests of at least two parties are generally concerned, and, in so far, it augurs favourably for the ends of justice, that persons acting as witnesses in the case feel something like equal interest in both. II. THE MODE OF HIS ACTING IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF HIS OFFICE AS A WITNESS. 1. He witnessed to the effect of confirming that portion of the Scriptures which God had previously given to the Church, as a revelation of His will. That portion is contained in the Old Testament exclusively, such as known to us, and therefore shutting out all Jewish Apocryphas, Talmuds, or Mishnas. To none of these mere human productions did the Lord Jesus ever testify, but in the course of His public teaching He witnessed again and again to the authenticity of the sacred Scriptures, in quoting from them certain things written concerning Himself by the inspiration of the Almighty. 2. Christ was also a Witness for God to the people, not only in testifying to what had already been written, but in farther adding to the revelation of Heaven. This revelation includes the whole of the New Testament, for this has been added to the Old by the Great Witness of whom we now speak, as all it contains He either delivered orally in the course of His personal ministry, or by the apostles, whose several epistles were written by His inspiration. 3. Jesus was still farther a Witness for God to the people, in the miracles He wrought, and in the holy exemplary life which He led. The many marvellous things He did afforded abundant proof that He came from God, and that consequently His doctrines were true. As God-man He witnessed in the flesh to His own holy law, and in that hath set us an example that we should follow His steps. 4. Jesus, in acting as a Witness for God to the people, sealed and ratified His testimony in His cruel and ignominious death. (*J. Allan.*) *Christ's triple character:*—There is no Gospel apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, it is not at all wonderful that, after the glorious Gospel invitations, expostulations, and exhortations of the first three verses of this chapter, we should come, in the fourth verse, to these words: "'Behold, I have given Him.' I have talked to you about waters, and about wine and milk, and about bread, and about fatness; but, 'behold, I have given Him,' for He is all these,—water, wine, milk, bread, fatness. I have spoken to you about 'an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David;' but I mean Him, for He is the great Surety of the covenant, and I have given Him for a covenant of the people." We cannot do without a personal Christ. The first word in our text, "Behold," reminds us that this is a theme for wonder. A part of the wonder concerning Christ consists in the fact that His Father has given Him to the people. Not to you, O kings and princes;—not to you, a few aristocrats picked here and there; but, "I have given Him for a witness to the people." He is the people's Christ, the people's Leader, the people's Friend, the people's King. And the wonder increases when you recollect that the word translated "people" might be just as accurately rendered "nations." No doubt, the Lord's intention here is to refer to the Gentiles:—not to the chosen people, Israel, alone; but even to us, "sinners of the Gentiles," who were outside the favoured family of the Jews. I. Let us, with believing eye, SEE OUR LORD IN THREE CHARACTERS OR RELATIONSHIPS. 1. Our blessed Lord is a Witness for the Father,—a Witness concerning the Father. We should never have known what God was like if it had not been that "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." If, indeed, I do see God in Christ, what a blessed God He is to me! For who would not love Jesus? Nor is Christ merely the Witness concerning God's character, but also concerning God's bearing towards us. How does God feel with regard to His rebellious creatures? He also came to be a

Witness of another matter, namely, that God has set up a kingdom among the sons of men. There is no way of entrance into the kingdom of Divine grace except by regeneration; and Jesus Christ is the Witness of that great truth. Whatever Christ has taught concerning any truth which has to do with our salvation, is His witness upon that point; and if we want to know the truth about anything, we must go to Christ to learn it. 2. The second office of Christ, mentioned in the text, is that of a Leader to His own people. The word "leader" might be rendered "the foremost;" and, truly, Christ is the foremost of all His people,—the standard-bearer among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. In the Church of God, Jesus Christ is the Leader, because His life is the perfect example of practical holiness. First, He is God's witness revealing to us the truth; then, next, He is our Example, working out the practical part of that revelation in His own life. 3. The third character our Lord bears, according to our text, is that of Commander. There may be many meanings given to that title, but it seems to me that it must relate mainly to those of His people who are not yet saved. To them, He is a Commander; to them He issues laws as a law-giver, for such is also the sense of the term. But I think there is more, in this title of Christ, than the mere fact of His making the law, and bidding us publish it abroad in His name. He is also a Commander because He has power to enforce His proclamations. He calls a nation that knew Him not, and then they learn to know Him. II. THE THREE EXCELLENCES OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THESE THREE OFFICES. 1. Is Christ a Witness? Then He is a true Witness. There are no falsehoods or mistakes in the witness which Christ bears. 2. If our Lord be a Leader, he has, in that capacity, the quality of holiness. You may safely follow wherever He leads you. 3. If He be a Commander, you see in Him Divine power. It is no use having a commander-in-chief who issues proclamations, but who has neither wit nor wisdom in the day of battle. III. THESE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXCELLENCES DEMAND FROM US THREE DUTIES. 1. Is Christ a true Witness? Then, believe Him. 2. If He be a Leader, and holiness is the mark of His Leadership, then, let us imitate Him. 3. Then, if He be a Commander, what does He require of us? Obedience. IV. THERE ARE THREE BENEFITS WHICH WILL BE SECURED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE DUTIES. 1. If you do believe Christ, "the faithful and true Witness," then you have certainty as to what you believe. 2. Then, if Jesus Christ be our Example, and we imitate Him, the next benefit we obtain is safety. 3. If Christ be our Commander, and He hath all power, and we obey Him, then victory is sure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The greatest Gift in time or eternity:*—I. A DIVINE GIFT. 1. The Father has given His Son. 2. The Son consented to be given. 3. We have the purpose of this Gift avowed. "For a Witness," etc. 4. The persons thus favoured. "The people." II. A DIVINE PROMISE made to this Leader and Commander. 1. To call those whom He does not know (ver. 5). That must be a strange nation which Christ does not know. There will be people at the last to whom Christ will say, "I never knew you;" and there are such people now, whom Christ has never known in this sense. He never spoke with them, He never heard their voice in prayer, He never knew them by mutual acquaintance. And there are nations of this kind of people. 2. Christ is to make run those who do not know Him. People who did not know anything about Christ, and who did not want to know about Him, shall on a sudden hear of Him, and they shall run to Him. I have often noticed that, when such people do come to Christ, they always run to Him. 3. Here is a Divine promise to exert a singular motive power. "Because of the Lord thy God," etc. A glorified Christ makes men run to Him. III. A DIVINE EXHORTATION." (*Ibid.*) **A Leader and Commander to the people.**—*Our glorified Leader:*—1. He was typified in David. He has been constituted Prince. His name is made great. His throne shall be for ever. His kingdom shall be made sure. For a great while to come His house shall stand. His name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him happy (Ps. lxxii.). The type was spoilt by David's infidelity and sin. But, even though this was so, on God's side there was no vacillation, no swerving from His purpose. His mercies were sure. Much more in the case of Jesus Christ, the eternal purpose cannot miscarry. 2. This title is applied to Christ after His resurrection. Four times only in the New Testament is Christ called Leader or Prince, and always in resurrection. (Acts iii. 14, 15; v. 31; Heb. ii. 9, 10; xii. 2.) However translated, whether by "Author," "Prince," "Captain," or "Leader," it is the same Greek word, and is applied to Christ as risen. 3. The original meaning of the word is very interesting. Etymologically, it means the first of a file of men, and therefore their leader and commanding officer. This conception, therefore, is presented to our mind, that our Lord is the first of a long procession of souls whom He is

leading up from the grave, with its darkness and corruption, through the steeps of air, past principalities and powers, to the very throne of God. He is the First-born from the dead, and therefore Ruler of the kings of the earth. He first, by the resurrection from the dead, has obtained the right to proclaim light to the Gentiles. If this thought of Christ being the first of a long procession is carried out, in respect to the passages mentioned above, it yields great results. (1) He leads the dead out of death into life. (2) He leads the vanquished into the victory of the heavenlies. (3) He leads sufferers through suffering to the perfection, which is only possible as the effect of grievous pain, sanctified through the grace of the Holy Ghost. (4) He leads also the ranks of believers. (Heb. xi., xii. 2.) (5) These conclusions suggested by the New Testament are substantiated and confirmed by the expression used here. "Thou shalt call a nation that Thou knowest not." To whom can this refer, save to the Gentiles, who were once far off? "Nations that knew not Thee, shall run unto Thee." Of whom can this be true, save of that vast ingathering suggested to our Lord by the Greeks who came to Him before He died, and concerning whom He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"? (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Christ given as a Leader*:—He is peculiarly fitted to be a Leader and Commander—I. BECAUSE HE IS INVESTED WITH FULL POWERS AND AUTHORITY TO ACT ACCORDING TO HIS PLEASURE. II. BECAUSE OF HIS KNOWING ALL THE DIFFICULTIES THEY HAVE TO ENCOUNTER IN THEIR SOJOURNING AND WARRING CONDITION. III. BECAUSE OF POSSESSING FULL ABILITY TO INFLUENCE, IN ANY MANNER HE SEES FIT, THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN. IV. BECAUSE OF THE EXAMPLE HE GAVE IN HIS PERSONAL CONFLICTS WITH HIS ENEMIES, OF WISDOM, FAITHFULNESS, AND COURAGE. V. BECAUSE OF POSSESSING FULL ABILITY TO REWARD EVERY FAITHFUL FOLLOWER. Who, then, would not wish to fight under the banners of such a Commander? It is no dubious cause, but one that always ends in glory. (*J. Allan.*) *The people's Leader*:—I. GOD HAS APPOINTED JESUS CHRIST TO LEAD US IN THE WAY OF TRUTH. II. GOD HAS GIVEN JESUS CHRIST TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. Jesus leads us by showing that God gives us power to walk in the path of righteousness. 2. In following Jesus in the path of righteousness we must employ self-effort. God gives power, but it is requisite for us to use it. Without earnest self-effort, righteousness is impossible. Notice the crawling worm, how it wriggles and struggles to escape from its old self, and how it is rewarded with wings to fly from flower to flower in the garden. Hear the wee bird pecking itself out from its shell. III. GOD HAS GIVEN CHRIST TO BE OUR LEADER TO THE CALVARY OF SELF-SURRENDER. The inner chamber of the heart is required for the indwelling of God. If the inner man be true, temptation has but little power over us. IV. JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN GIVEN TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE WARFARE OF HOLINESS. V. GOD HAS GIVEN JESUS TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE WRESTLINGS OF PRAYER. Remember that our Leader spent whole nights in prayer to God. VI. GOD HAS GIVEN JESUS TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE INVINCIBILITY OF FAITH. 1. Let us copy His faith in the loving care of our Father. 2. Let those who are teachers of others follow our Leader in His faith in the power of the Gospel. 3. With our Leader, let us have faith that our paths are Divinely directed. VII. GOD HAS GIVEN CHRIST TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE CONFIDENCE OF HOPE. VIII. GOD HAS GIVEN CHRIST TO BE OUR LEADER IN THE CAMPAIGN OF LOVE. Wishing well is a good thing, but doing is better. Jesus Christ is our Leader in loving words and active deeds. (*W. Birch.*) *The grand Chieftain*:—Assuming that these words apply to Christ, they present Him in a capacity with which the world has ever associated its loftiest ideas of heroism, glory and renown. In many other places Christ is spoken of as an illustrious Chieftain (Josh. v. 13, 15; Isa. lxiii. 1–5; Heb. ii. 10; Rev. xix. 11–16). He is the Captain of the Lord's hosts. His relation of Commander to His people suggests to us certain ideas concerning the Church. I. THE CONFLICT OF THE CHURCH. The state of the good here is not a state of conquest but of battle. 1. The enemies are principles, not persons. Error, corruptions, impiety, immorality, wrong in all its forms. 2. The inspiration is benevolent, not selfish. None of the selfish passions, ambition, avarice, revenge, fire the heart and nerve the arm of the true Church in battle. It is pure benevolence, that benevolence which seeketh not its own, which bears each other's burdens. 3. The weapons are spiritual, not carnal. Not civil law, worldly policy, but truth, example, love: we persuade men. Moral suasion, founded on truth, instinct with love, backed by example, is the grand weapon. II. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. All the members of the true Church are as one united army, in one campaign, under one Commander. 1. They unite in the aims of their Commander. All loyal armies are of one mind as to aim, and that aim is the purpose of their chieftain. His aim

is to establish judgment, rectitude on the earth, and every member of the true Church has this one master-aim. 2. They unite in the direction of their Commander. His will is their law. 3. They unite in the spirit of their Commander. Every commander seeks to give his master-passion to his army. It is only as he succeeds it can be true to him. The Church of Christ is united by the spirit of Christ, that spirit permeates, centralizes and controls all. III. THE SUBORDINATION OF THE CHURCH. The subordination of the Church to Christ is—1. Unconditional. 2. Cordial. It is not so in the martial life of men. Many a soldier is forced, contrary to the wishes of his heart, to subordination to the will of his commander. All the instincts of his manhood often recoil at it. Not so with those under the command of Christ. 3. Permanent. Human commanders die while the campaign is being accomplished, and soldiers recover their independent wills and become their own masters. Not so with the soldiers of Christ. IV. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH. 1. Your Commander is all wise. He knows the number, the resources, the stratagems of your antagonists. Nothing in the future will take Him by surprise. 2. Your Commander is all-mighty. There are no difficulties He cannot overcome; no exigencies that He cannot supply. 3. Your Commander is all-generous. 4. Christ is a Commander who leads all His soldiers to glory. He makes them kings and priests unto God. Conclusion: Let the battle of our life be a battle fought under this banner. Let this love inspire us to brave deeds. It is said of Trajan that he won the heart of his army because he tore up his robe to bind up the wounds of a soldier who had been stricken down in the field. Let the memory of Christ's unparalleled love win our highest sympathies and undivided powers. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 5. **Behold, Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not.**—*Isaiah's anticipation*:—We cannot tell what picture was in Isaiah's mind and hovering before his eyes. We do not know just what degree of visible sovereignty he hoped to see Jerusalem attain—but the essential idea is clear enough. He believed that all people were to turn to the Hebrews because the Hebrews were especially God's people, because the nations would all feel that the God whom they all must have had been made known with the completest clearness and purity among the Jews. How clearly that prophecy has been fulfilled all subsequent history can tell. The Hebrew Book, the Hebrew men, have been the magnets which have drawn the world's devotion. Into the midst of Judaism was set the incarnation of the Godhead, which, shining out from thence, has been the light which has enlightened every man. The Bible is the very epitome of Judaism, and the Bible is the centre more and more completely of the world's devotion. "Nations that know not thee shall run unto thee." What words like those could prophesy the scenes which have come in these modern days—Englishmen, Italians, Germans, Americans seeking the law of inspiration of their life in the old Hebrew Bible, turning those venerable pages to learn how they ought to live, drinking at the fountain of the ideas of Israel the strength and cleansing which their own modern life demanded. We abase the Jew, sometimes we sneer at him and despise him—but we live upon the thoughts which he has thought, and the visions which he saw of God make the very sunshine of our life. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The helpfulness of spirituality*:—There is a certain sort of man who is among his fellow-men what Israel was among the nations. Other men are richer, other men are mightier than he. Often their riches and their might seem to crowd upon him, as Assyria and Egypt crowded upon Judea, and leave him no chance to breathe; but in the long run he is the king of life. Men turn to him in their deepest moments and with their deepest needs. He helps men very different from, very much greater than, himself. To become such a man is the truest and worthiest ambition of a human soul. To be content to live without being such a man in some degree shows a pusillanimous and feeble nature. (*Ibid.*) *The spiritual man*:—What is it to be a spiritual man and to live spiritually? A spiritual man is a man who deals with the spirits and the souls of things, and lives for them. Here are two money-making men. One of them values his money for the comfortable uses he can put it to; the other is not satisfied until he has got at the heart of riches, and absorbed his wealth into his character, and made himself by it a richer nature and a fuller man. Here are two religious men. One of them rejoices in religion for the good it does. He says that it secures order in this world, and saves suffering in the world to come. Another man feeds his heart on the very substance of religion itself. To commune with God, and love Him and obey Him, is the very life of life. Spirituality is not an attainment, an acquisition of the nature; it is a quality of the nature. It is not a thing to be; it is a way of being

everything. It must be very sweet and strong when this Judea-consciousness really takes possession of a man and fills him. It is not pride or conceit. It is something far sacreder than that. But into his ears there comes a message from God: "I have appointed you to help your brethren. I have taught you to see the soul of things. I have filled you with the mystery of living, the awfulness of the soul." "Behold, thou shalt call a nation which thou knowest not, and nations which know not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God!" If in any way God is making you a Judea—if He is using you for one of His gathering and distributing points of spiritual life, be satisfied. There is no nobler work which anybody in this world can do than that. To know God so that other souls may know Him from us; to be in any way a deepener and enlightener of the lives of our brethren—what is there for a man to thank God for like that? Do we question that question for a moment? Then look at Jesus! See how in Him you have the very pattern and perfection of that life. Jesus was among men what Judea was among the nations. The other exhortation is for Assyria and Egypt—for men of worldly ways and hard, unyielding natures. If you do not feel the power of Judaism, you ought to be very much afraid about yourself. If a spiritual life can be lived right by your side, and you receive from it no rebuke or invitation, then beware! That is a terrible condition. The spring wind calls to the rock, and it has no green answer to send back. God calls to you by His voice in an enlightened soul, and you are dead. (*Ibid.*) **He hath glorified thee.**—*Christ glorified:*—I shall invite your attention to the declaration of my text—I. AS IT RELATES TO THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST OVER HIS CHURCH AND OVER ALL THINGS FOR HIS CHURCH. Look at the solemn position in which our Lord stood to be glorified, relative to His headship; that the headship of authority, of influence, of life, all should be concentrated in Him; that in the Church there should positively be no authority, no life, no Divine influence but what we have in Christ our Head; that His headship over the Church being that of authority, holds all worlds in abeyance, all enemies in subjection, all circumstances under His control, all souls at His command, all servants at His bidding, all ordinances and privileges for His bestowing; and it is by His authority alone that they are communicated. The centurion of old seemed to be conscious of this authority when he wanted Him to come and heal his servant. "Lord, trouble not Thyself," said he, "for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." Whether it is for the breaking of a sinner's heart, comforting the mourner's soul, or loosening of legal bonds, it requires but His word, and it is done. II. AS IT RELATES TO THE ECONOMY OF GRACE, in which He is pre-eminently glorified. This economy of salvation is complete, perfect and infallible. III. AS IT RELATES TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS LIFE AND DEATH, in all which He manifested forth His glory, as it is written of Him. If God has glorified Jesus thus, how shall I glorify Him? The most effectual way in which a poor sinner can glorify Christ, is by trusting to Him, and leaving everything with Him. IV. AS IT RELATES TO THE DIGNITY OF HIS THRONE, UPON WHICH HE IS NOW GLORIFIED WITHIN THE VEIL. The prophet Daniel had a vision of this, when he was directed to speak of the different kingdoms that should be set up. This exactly accords with the language of the apostle, who, speaking of this glorious kingdom of Christ, says, "that it is at the right hand of the Father in the heavens," "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Christ, in His dignity and glorification, upholds the national glory of Zion; the national glory of His redeemed kingdom. (*J. Irons.*) *The glorified Christ:*—"He hath glorified Thee." 1. By raising Thee triumphant from the dead. 2. By exalting Thee to the right hand of the Majesty on high. 3. By committing into Thy hands all power in heaven and on earth. (*R. Macculloch.*)

Vers. 6–9. **Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.**—*The Lord to be sought:*—Notice how it reads: "Seek the Lord." It don't say seek happiness; it don't say seek peace; it don't say seek joy. A good many people seek after joy, after peace, after happiness. I cannot find any place in the Bible where we are told to seek for peace or joy. If you have the Spirit, you will have the fruit of the Spirit; and you won't have the fruit without the Spirit itself. You might as well look for an apple or an orange without a tree. You get a good tree and you have good fruit. Therefore, what we want is to seek the Lord Himself, and if I have Christ formed in me, the hope of glory, I will have peace, and joy, and rest. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Seeking the Lord:*—I. THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR SEEKING THE LORD. Man by nature

is estranged from God; knows not his Creator; is "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel;" cut off from God, who is "not in all his thoughts." As such, he is—1. Helpless. "He hath nothing in himself whereby he may help himself." "Dead in trespasses and sins." 2. Hopeless. "Without God and without hope in the world." Cannot look forward into the future with cheering expectations. 3. Unhappy. "Poor and miserable, and blind and naked." "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked." II. THE CERTAINTY OF FINDING HIM. 1. He does not ask of us impossibilities. He is a reasonable God, and never gives a command without giving also the power to perform it. 2. His promises are sure. "If ye seek Me, I will be found of you." "Seek and ye shall find." He never saith, "Seek ye My face in vain." III. THE FITTEST TIME TO SEEK HIM. 1. Now. "Now is the accepted time; now the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear His voice." No promise is made of to-morrow. IV. THE CONSEQUENT BLESSINGS. 1. Pardon of Sin. "I will pardon all their iniquities." 2. A new heart. "A new heart will I give you." 3. Adoption into His family. "Heirs of God." 4. Restoration to His favour. "A new creature." "Made nigh by blood of Christ." 5. Love to God and man. "Love of God shed abroad in the heart." 6. Life everlasting. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." (*F. G. Davis.*) *The lost Lord*:—1. To "seek the Lord while He may be found" implies, among other things, this, that the Lord is lost by and to those thus called to seek Him. We speak of a lost sinner; we may with equal truth speak of a lost Lord. The lost sinner and the lost Lord are correlative. The sinner is lost, because he has lost the Lord. The Lord's finding the sinner, is the sinner's finding the Lord. It is not that the Lord has ceased to be, to govern the world, to support His creatures. His providence indeed is exercised (Acts xvii. 27, 28) that men should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him. Nor is He far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being. But the Lord is lost in this sense, that He is practically lost as Father, Friend and Portion, God and Guide, not recognized and accepted as Lord, by sinful men. 2. Apart from redeeming grace, the sinner is hopelessly lost to God, because God is hopelessly lost to the sinner. The evidences of this loss are many and various. The providential rule of God over men is carried on that they "might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." The whole scheme of grace rests upon, as it was rendered necessary by, men's loss of God. It is not merely God's plan for seeking lost men, but God's plan for coming near to men and being found of them. 3. If we look at men themselves, it is evident that, to all that have not found Him in His appointed way of grace, the Lord is lost. Witness the conscious or unconscious expression of this loss, in manifold ways and forms; in men's corrupt, miserable condition, their restlessness and aimlessness, their hunt for substitutes of the lost Lord, their self-righteousness, their strange discontents, until they seek and find the Lord. Is not the Lord lost out of men's hearts, creating by His absence a void there which only Himself can fill; out of men's consciences, so that the fear of man has more authority and power with them than the fear of God; out of men's minds, so that God is rarely, if ever, in all their thoughts, or is misunderstood and misinterpreted, and spiritual things cannot be discerned or welcomed; and finally, out of their lives, so that men can live and love without Him, can live to themselves, can live as though there were no God? 4. This is the greatest loss of all. What more has a man, if he has lost the Lord, and has not again found Him, in a world where the Lord is needed so much, where nothing else can make good the loss, and where yet the lost Lord may be found? How welcome to men should be the voice from heaven that tells them that the lost Lord has come near, and may be found, and how and where and when. (*Alex. Warrack, M.A.*) *No delay*:—If Adam and Eve were somewhat ignorant, as we suppose them to have been, of God's omniscience, no wonder that they attempted to escape His notice. Their interest appeared to lie, not in seeking the Lord, but in fleeing from Him. Why so? Ignorant as yet of a mercy which was about for the first time to be revealed, they knew Him only as a God of justice and of truth. But what makes it your plain as well as highest interest to seek the Lord, is that you know that He is very pitiful and of great mercy. I. CONSIDER WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY SEEKING THE LORD. The sense in which this is to be taken is explained by the succeeding verses, "Let," etc. It is as a God, who will have mercy on the worst, and abundantly pardon the wickedest, that we are to seek the Lord—seeking Him without an hour's delay. We may, as man has often done, stand at a human bar conscious of our innocence. We may refuse to put in a plea for mercy; boldly

declaring that we want nothing more, and will accept of nothing less, than impartial justice. At God's tribunal, however, it is very different. There, simple justice were sure damnation. It is as just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, that we are to seek the Lord; and all the blessings which in that gracious character He has, and He promises, to bestow. II. INQUIRE WHEN THESE THINGS ARE TO BE OBTAINED. 1. The Lord, as bestowing the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul, is to be found in this world, not in another. 2. The Lord is not to be found on a deathbed. 3. The Lord is more likely to be found now than at any future time. We can foretell neither what, nor where we shall be to-morrow. Sin is like the descent of a hill, where every step we take increases the difficulty of our return. Sin is like a river in its course; the longer it runs, it wears a deeper channel, and the farther from the fountain, it swells in volume and acquires a greater strength. Sin is like a tree in its progress; the longer it grows, it spreads its roots the wider; grows taller; grows thicker; till the sapling which once an infant's arm could bend, raises its head aloft, defiant of the storm. Sin in its habits becomes stronger every day—the heart grows harder; the conscience grows duller; the distance between God and the soul grows greater; and, like a rock hurled from the mountain's top, the farther we descend, we go down, and down, and down, with greater and greater rapidity. How easy, for example, is it to touch the conscience of childhood; but how difficult to break in on the torpor of a hoary head! III. THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE ARE STRONG REASONS FOR SEEKING PARDON AND SALVATION NOW. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Opportunity*:—How much depends upon timing things, as to advantage, and usefulness, and necessity! In this view, how important is opportunity. (*W. Jay.*) *Importance of seeking God at the present moment*:—Let us consider these words—I. AS AN INJUNCTION TO DUTY. This seeking of God is to be considered, not only as initial, but as repeated and constant. II. AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO HOPE. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." We have the very same thought in the thirty-second Psalm, where it is said, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." "We are saved by hope." And what a foundation is laid for this confidence! What a foundation is laid in the Word of the Gospel. What a foundation is laid in His invitations. How encouraging is all this! If possibility will sometimes move people, and if probability will commonly move them, how much more will actual certainty influence them; especially when the prize is nothing less than the possession of God—the God of all grace and of glory! III. AS A SECURITY FROM PRESUMPTION. Though God is to be found, He is not always to be found. (*Ibid.*) *The times and places for seeking God*:—I. WHERE? 1. The mercy-seat, the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. In the Gospel. What is the Gospel? Just the tones of the voice of Jesus Christ, prolonged and perpetuated in the language of man. 3. In the preaching of His Word. 4. At the communion-table. II. WHEN? 1. In time as opposed to eternity. 2. On the Sabbath. 3. In the season of affliction. 4. In an emphatic sense, seek God now, for "now is the accepted time," etc. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *The God-seeking work, and God-seeking season*:—Implied in the text is the appalling fact that man has lost the Lord, the true sovereign and God of his being. But there is another fact which is yet more appalling, that man is unconscious of the terrible catastrophe which has befallen him. But God does not abandon the lost one to his fate. He reminds him of his forfeited state and place; He urges him to return to the home which he has left, and regain the royalty which he has lost, and become one with the God from whom he has alienated himself. I. THE GOD-SEEKING WORK. "Seek the Lord." But the Scriptures represent God as seeking man: this being the case, is it not strange to urge man to seek God? The fact that He seeks us is the ground and reason why we should seek Him. The call of God to us, and His search for us, is our greatest encouragement in seeking Him; for it is a pledge that our calling and seeking will not be fruitless. The text, in the words "seek" and "call," indicates the method by which we should "seek the Lord." We must return to Him by humble, penitential prayer. Seek Him by the guidance of His word: under the inspiration of His Spirit: through the mediation of His Son. Prove the sincerity of your search by endeavouring to comply with His will. "Let the wicked forsake," etc. This is the most urgent duty of sinful man. We can be truly blessed only in union with God. II. THE GOD-SEEKING SEASON. 1. There is a season when the Lord may be found—a time when He is near. He may be found when we feel Him near to us. There are times of spiritual awakening and revival, when we feel the presence and power of God; then may He be found. There are occasions when we hear His voice, and feel His

influence in the events of life; then may He be found. There are seasons when by the preaching of His word He awakens earnest thought, carries conviction to the conscience, and inspires the heart with noble desires; then may He be found. Now may He be found. 2. There will come a season when the Lord may not be found—a time when He will not be near. Locally, He will be near to all beings everywhere and for ever; but, if any one persist in neglecting His merciful calls and gracious offers, there will come a time when such an one will hear no kindly voice from Him, will feel no saving influence from Him. There came such a time in the life of King Saul; and the lost man cried in agony,—"God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams." By your own interest, I urge you to seek Him at once. By the solicitude of God for your well-being. (*W. Jones.*) I. THE OBJECT, whom we must seek. 1. God hath made Himself an Object to be sought. 2. He is the sole and adequate Object of our desires. II. THE ACT; what it is to seek Him. III. THE TIME; when we must seek the Lord. "While He may be found." There is no time to seek Him but now. For—1. It is the greatest folly in the world thus to play with danger, to seek death first in the errors of our life, and then, when we have run our course, and death is ready to devour us, to look faintly back upon life. The later we seek, the less able we shall be to seek; the further we stray, the less willing to return. 2. It is dangerous in respect of God Himself, whose call we regard not, whose counsels we reject, whose patience we dally with, whose judgments we slight, and so tread that mercy under our feet which should save us, and will not seek Him yet, because we presume that, though we grieve His Spirit, though we resist His Spirit, though we blaspheme His Spirit, yet, after all these scorns and contempts, He will yet sue unto us, and offer Himself, and be found at any time in which we shall think convenient to seek Him. (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *The delay of conversion:*—I. WE SHALL ENDEAVOUR TO PROVE FROM OUR OWN CONSTITUTION, THAT IT IS DIFFICULT, NOT TO SAY IMPOSSIBLE, TO BE CONVERTED AFTER HAVING WASTED LIFE IN VICE. It is clear that we carry in our own breasts principles which render conversion difficult, and I may add, impossible, if deferred to a certain period. To comprehend this, form in your mind an adequate idea of conversion, and fully admit, that the soul, in order to possess this state of grace, must acquire two essential dispositions; it must be illuminated; it must be sanctified. 1. You cannot become regenerate unless you know the truths of religion. Now, every period of life is not alike proper for disposing the body to this happy temperature, which leaves the soul at liberty for reflection and thought. If we defer the acquisition of religious knowledge till age has chilled the blood, obscured the understanding, enfeebled the memory, and confirmed prejudice and obstinacy, it is almost impossible to be in a situation to acquire that information without which our religion can neither be agreeable to God, afford us solid consolation in affliction, nor motive sufficient against temptation. 2. The soul not only loses with time the facility of discerning error from truth, but after having for a considerable time habituated itself to converse solely with sensible objects, it is almost impossible to attach it to any other. In order to conversion, we must have a radical and habitual love to God. This principle being allowed, all that we have to say against the delay of conversion becomes self-established. The whole question is reduced to this; if at the extremity of life, if in a short and fleeting moment, you can acquire this habit of Divine love, then we will preach no more against delay. But if time, labour, and will, are required to form this genuine source of love to God, you should frankly acknowledge the folly of postponing so important a work for a single moment. This being allowed, we shall establish, on two principles, all that we have to advance upon this subject. (1) We cannot acquire any habit without performing the correspondent actions. (2) When a habit is once rooted, it becomes difficult or impossible to correct it, in proportion as it is confirmed. Habits of the mind are formed as habits of the body; the former become as incorrigible as the latter. As, then, in the acquisition of a corporeal habit, we must perform the correspondent actions, so in forming the habits of religion, of love, humility, patience, charity, we must habituate ourselves to the duties of patience, humility and love. Further, we must not only engage in the offices of piety to form the habit, but they must be frequent; just as we repeat acts of vice to form a vicious habit. We make a rapid progress in the career of vice. But the habits of holiness are directly opposed to our constitution. When we wish to become converts, we assume a double task; we must demolish, we must build. Such is the only way by which we can expect the establishment of grace in the heart; it is by unremitting labour, by perseverance in duty, and by perpetual vigilance. Now, who does not perceive

the folly of those who procrastinate their conversion? who imagine that a word from a minister, a prospect of death, a sudden resolution, can instantaneously produce perfection of virtue? II. WE SHALL DEMONSTRATE THAT REVELATION PERFECTLY ACCORDS WITH NATURE ON THIS HEAD; and that whatever the Bible has taught concerning the efficiency of grace, the supernatural aids of the Spirit, and the extent of mercy, favours, in no respect, the delay of conversion. 1. The first proofs of which people avail themselves, to excuse their negligence and delay, and the first arguments of defence, which they draw from the Scriptures, in order to oppose us, are taken from the aids of the Spirit, promised in the new covenant. To this objection we must reply. We shall manifest its absurdity—(1) By the ministry God has established in the Church. (2) By the efforts He requires us to make, previously to our presuming that we have received the Holy Spirit—(3) By the manner in which He requires us to co-operate with the Spirit, when we have received Him. (4) By the punishments He has denounced against those who resist His work. (5) By the conclusions which the Scripture itself deduces from our natural weakness, and from the necessity of grace. 2. The notion of the mercy of God is a second source of illusion. "God is merciful," say they, "the covenant He has established with man is a covenant of grace. A general amnesty is granted to every sinner. Hence, though our conversion be defective, God will receive our dying breath, and yield to our tears. What, then, should deter us from giving free scope to our passions, and deferring the rigorous duties of conversion, till we are nothing worth for the world?" Detestable sophism! Here is the highest stage of corruption, the supreme degree of ingratitude. III. WE SHALL ENDEAVOUR TO CONFIRM THE DOCTRINES OF REASON AND REVELATION BY DAILY OBSERVATIONS ON THOSE WHO DEFER THE CHANGE. 1. You may oppose to us two classes of examples. In the first class, you may arrange those instantaneous conversions which grace has effectuated in a moment by a single stroke; and which apparently destroy what we have advanced on the force of habits, and on the economy of the Holy Spirit. In the second class, you will put those other sinners who, after the perpetration of enormous crimes, have obtained remission by a sigh, by a wish, by a few tears; and afford presumptive hopes, that to whatever excess we may carry our crimes, we shall never exceed the terms of mercy, or obstruct reception at the throne of grace. Consider that many of these conversions are not only out of the common course of religion, but also that they could not have been effectuated by less than miraculous powers. Consider that, among all those sinners, there was not one in the situation of a Christian who delays conversion to the close of life. Consider that you are enlightened with meridian lustre, which they had scarcely seen. Consider that you are pressed with a thousand motives unknown to them. Consider that they continued, for the most part, but a short time in sin; but you have wasted life in folly. Consider that they possessed distinguished virtues, which rendered them dear to God; but you have nothing to offer Him but dissipation or indolence. Consider that they were distinguished by repentance, which afforded constant proof of their sincerity: whereas it is still doubtful whether you shall ever be converted, and you go the way to make it impossible. See, then, whether your arguments are just, and whether your hopes are properly founded. 2. Hitherto we have examined the cases of those sinners who apparently contradict our principles; let us briefly review those by which they are confirmed. Let us prove that the long-suffering of God has its limits; and that in order to find Him propitious, we must "seek Him while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near." Three distinguished classes of examples confirm these illustrious truths. (1) Public catastrophes. (2) Obdurate sinners. (3) Dying men. Happy are they who are cautioned by the calamities of others! (*J. Saurin.*) *Scripture blessings conditional:*—The blessings promised in the Scriptures are always, more or less, conditional. 1. Here is a condition of time. "While He may be found." "While He is near." 2. Then, there are conditions on the part of men. The wicked is to forsake his way, etc. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The best time to seek the Lord:*—These verses (6, 7) are vitally connected. We must not overlook the fact that while salvation is offered to all, there is a time when it can be best sought; and, because of the moral barriers which maturity in sin makes, can be more easily obtained. The text teaches us—I. THAT THE LORD IS SPECIALLY NEAR TO SOME. 1. To the young. It is not mere poetry, but a literal fact, that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." The soul then is—(1) Purer. (2) More tender. (3) Less rebellious. 2. To those who are convinced of sin and are conscious of their need of Him. The distance between the soul and God is not a physical, but a moral one.

God cannot come near to the soul that clings to its guilt with a culpable pertinacity. But when that pertinacity gives way to penitence He draws near and presents a pardon, and then the hand of faith has only to be stretched out to receive it. II. THAT THOSE TO WHOM THE LORD IS THUS NEAR MAY EASILY FIND HIM NOW, BUT MAY FIND HIM ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY IN AFTER YEARS, OR MAY NOT FIND HIM AT ALL. Childhood and youthhood, how soon they are succeeded by manhood, and, unless there be early and immediate reformation, by maturity in selfishness and sin! Convictions, deep, fervent, strong, how soon they are consumed by contact with the world, unless they are immediately turned to good account! Delay will bring—1. More difficulty. 2. More danger. 3. Damnation! III. THAT THERE IS HOPE FOR THE OLDEST AND MOST HARDENED SINNERS WHO HAVE ALLOWED THEIR BEST TIME FOR SEEKING THE LORD TO PASS. Salvation is offered them; but there are conditions which they will find it difficult to comply with. 1. The casting off of evil habits. "Let the wicked forsake his way." 2. The abandonment of impious, iniquitous, thoughts. "And the unrighteous man his thoughts." 3. The submission and surrender of the soul to God. "And let him return unto the Lord." Are you prepared to comply with these conditions, hard, rigorous, only because your sins have made them so? If so, you are offered—(1) Mercy sufficient, comprehensive, to cover your sins. (2) Multiplied pardon to cancel your multiplied transgressions and crimes. Conclusion: Do not defer your soul's safety until—(1) To-morrow. Christ may not be "near" then; may not be found though you "call." (2) Your dying hour. You may be delirious, or so surprised or so stultified by your affliction as to be "disinclined to seek." (*E. D. Solomon.*) *Abundant pardon:*—In these words there is both exhortation and promise. There is exhibited—I. SOMETHING THAT SHOULD BE DONE. II. SOMETHING THAT MAY BE ENJOYED. (*Principal Morison, D.D.*) *Duty and privilege:*—I. DUTY is inculcated on the one hand. II. BLESSING is held out to view on the other. (*Ibid.*) *The lost Lord:*—God is near us in His works. But, in startling contrast to this evident nearness of God in His works, comes the injunction of our Scriptures—Seek ye the Lord. Why? Because ye have lost Him. I. CONSIDER TWO OR THREE EVIDENCES OF THIS STARTLING FACT. 1. Here is a company of persons. It is the time for pleasant talk and the happy methods by which men give the hours wing. What wide circle the conversation sweeps. And yet through all the company there is a severe proscription of one subject. There is a certain rule of breeding or taste or custom to which all defer. Suppose, for a moment, that one should break the rule and begin to talk of God in a reverent way, would not all feel that a dissonant chord was struck? Would not talk about God be very apt to be voted out, even in such a rightfully glad company? Is it not a quick, true test of the way they feel about Him? They have no sense of a blessed intimacy with Him. 2. Behold, also, the fact of a lost Lord in the universal feeling that, while it is natural for a man to love certain earthly objects—his children, for example—it is somehow not natural for a man to love God as he feels all the time he ought. 3. See, too, a further evidence of the fact in the attitude of the conscience toward Him. Man cannot get out of himself the conviction that the condition of soul which God intended for him is that of a sweet intimacy with Himself. And yet, like the cherubim at the gates of Eden with the flaming swords flashing every way, conscience stands preventing entrance into such condition. Man is consciously a criminal at the bar of the inviolable law; and standing there speechless and helpless, God is the most fearful being in the universe to the man. And yet, never with his Lord thus lost can man be at peace. II. A METHOD OF SEARCH FOR THE LOST LORD. 1. "Let the wicked forsake," etc. 2. "Let him return," etc. Repentance is double-sided. Not only must the man forsake, he must return. III. THE SURE RESULT OF SUCH RIGID SEARCH—the Lord will have mercy and will abundantly pardon. IV. THE TIME FOR SUCH RIGID SEARCH FOR THE LOST LORD—"While He may be found." That time is now, because refusal to seek God forces one into the firmer habit of hostility to Him. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *God unknown, yet known:*—1. If you mentally retire a few steps from it, and look at it reflectively and from a general point of view, you will find in the passage this notable paradox; that it invites you to seek a God who yet cannot be found, to know a God who yet cannot be known. For where should we seek God if not in His "ways;" or how shall we know Him, except by coming to know His "thoughts"? And yet, while we are urgently invited to seek Him, we are expressly told that there is the widest disparity between His thoughts

and our thoughts, between His ways and our ways. Now this strange paradox opens up to us what is, and is likely to remain, the great religious question of the time. Whether there is a religion at all, whether there is any revelation of the will of God, nay, whether there is any God to speak to us and to reveal His will; and, if there is, whether we know or can know anything about Him. In its higher modern form, atheism does not so much deny the existence of God as declare that, if there be a God it is impossible to demonstrate His existence, impossible to have any true knowledge of Him and of His will; impossible, therefore, to have any real fellowship with Him. If the atheism of to-day erect any altar at all—and some of its representatives are men of a profoundly religious temperament, and must have some form of worship—the only altar they will consent to erect is one which, like that at Athens, bears the inscription, "To an unknown God." If He does exist, they are sure that He cannot be what men have for the most part taken Him to be, nor like what even the best men are; sure that, being infinite and eternal, all virtues, all moral qualities and graces, must take a very different form in Him to that which they take in us. Their assumption, together with their calm and reasoned assertion that Science yields no proof of His existence, have bred some doubt even in the bosom of the Church itself. What we think of the sun does not much matter to the sun and cannot possibly alter its nature or put an end to its existence. And what men think of God does not and cannot change Him. Science says, or some of her disciples say for her: "In the whole range of visible and observed phenomena we find no proof of God." What then? If men will go to the visible for the invisible, to phenomena for realities, how can they hope to find what they seek? They might as well go to the sand of the desert for water, or to the troubled sea for a solid foundation. The Bible claims to be the very Word of God. And yet does it not everywhere affirm, what Science and Philosophy are proclaiming as a discovery of their own, that God is past finding out; that He is unsearchable, neither to be discovered nor comprehended by man's feeble powers? The Scriptures, then, do proclaim God to be unknowable, above our reach, in a great variety of forms; they declare that as the heavens are high above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. So that modern scepticism, original as it takes itself to be, is simply announcing, as its last discovery, what the apostles and prophets found out centuries on centuries ago. 2. But you will naturally ask: "Does not the Bible teach us something more than this? something more than that God cannot be found out by dint of intellectual research?" Yes! Admitting God to be unknowable, it yet affirms that He may be known. We cannot find Him out to perfection, but He sufficiently, and most truly, reveals Himself to us in His works, in His Word, in His Son. God's thoughts and ways, we are told, are as high above ours as the heavens above the earth. But the heavens, high as they are, are yet known to us; and, though known, are yet unknown. We none of us know all that the heavens contain and reveal, nor all the laws which are at work upon and within them. But though "heaven" be so imperfectly known to us, does any sane man doubt that there is a heaven, or that it holds within it the sun, moon, and stars? Does any sane man doubt that we know something of the mechanical and chemical structure of the heavenly bodies, of the laws by which their movements are governed and controlled, of the mode in which they affect us, and the world in which we live, and the other worlds related to them? Unknown to us, and even unknowable, not to be found out to perfection, we nevertheless know them—know at least enough of the heavens to be sure that they exist, and to guide us in all the practical purposes of life. And it is precisely in the same sense that God is both known to us, and unknown. We have not learned, we cannot learn, all that He is, all that He does, or all the reasons which determine the several aspects and movements of His providence: but we may know, we do know and are sure, that He is, and that He rules over all. No doubt we know Him, in part, by our reason. It is not to reason alone, nor to reason mainly, that the Bible appeals. The Bible nowhere deals with God as a problem to be demonstrated, nor professes to give a complete or a philosophical view of His Being and the qualities of His Being. It shows us a more excellent way of finding Him. It affirms that as we ourselves grow in righteousness we shall come to know Him who is righteous; that as we grow in purity we shall see Him who is pure; that as we grow in love we shall become one with Him who is love. "Blessed are

the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And is that not the way in which we come to know all persons, and especially good persons? The child does not know his father perfectly: but need he doubt that he has a father? The child can never know the goodness of a good father until he becomes good himself and a father: but need we, therefore, doubt whether his father be a good man? And may not we in like manner know that God is; do we not know that He is, although we are but children in understanding? If you have once come to know God for yourselves in this most natural yet Divine way, you will cleave to Him, and to your faith in Him, though the heavens should fall and time should be no more. Your feet are on the rock, and the everlasting arms are about you for evermore. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The incredible mercy of God:*—If there be some who find it hard to believe that there is a God, there are others who find it equally hard to believe that He is good,—so good that He can forgive all sins, even theirs. Look at these verses again, then, and mark their ruling intention. The prophet had been commissioned to carry a message to the captive Jews who sat by the waters of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. The message was that, heinous as their iniquity had been, their iniquity was pardoned. But sinful men, especially when they are suffering the bitter punishment of their sins, are apt to be hopeless men. As nothing is possible to doubt and despair, as above all the energy of active moral exertion is impossible, God sets Himself to remove the natural incredulity and hopelessness of the men He was about to save. That His mercy is incredible, He admits; but He affirms that it is only incredible in the sense of being incredibly larger and better than they imagine it to be. They might have found it impossible to forgive those who had sinned against them as they had sinned against Him. "But," pleads God, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." It is a mercy which does not condone men's sins, but a mercy which saves them from their sins, which calls upon them and compels them to abandon their "wicked ways" and their "unrighteous thoughts." No mercy short of this would be true mercy. To make men happy in their sins is impossible, as impossible as to make them good in their sins. For sin is misery; sin is a bondage to an alien and malignant power which every free spirit must resent and abhor. And even if this ignoble miracle were possible, if a man could be made happy while violating the very law of his being, who that is capable of reflection, of virtue, of goodness, would care to have such a miracle wrought upon him? To be happy in sin he must cease to be himself, cease to be a man. The mercy of God, viewed as saving men from evil thoughts and ways—which is the only true mercy—is simply incredible: so the prophet affirms, so we profess to think and believe. But do we really believe it? Do we act as if we did? Many hardly believe that they have sins which need a great act of Divine forgiveness. Many more do not know that, in order to forgive, God must punish their sins. When the punishment comes, they take it as proving that He has not forgiven them, as proving the severity, the anger of God, not His mercy. In our turn, indeed, we all doubt the mercy of God when we most need to believe in it, distrust it when we most need to cast ourselves upon it. Any profound consciousness of sin is apt to make that mercy incredible to us. In our cooler moments it may help us to remember that the very punishments that wait on sin, since they wait on it by a constant and invariable law, are designed for our good. All natural and universal laws must subserve our welfare, if the world and human life be ruled by God; and, among others, the law which metes out to every man the due reward of his iniquities. In part we can even see how this law contributes to our welfare. It makes us terribly aware that we have sinned—a fact we are very slow to realize. We must expect to be convinced of the compassion of God, not so much by having the kindness of His laws demonstrated to us, as by listening to the men whom we believe to have had the largest experience of His ways and to enjoy the profoundest sympathy with His thoughts. Just as we come to know the righteous God by becoming righteous, so we may hope to learn more of Him from the men whose righteousness is far more eminent and conspicuous than our own. Just as we come to know the mercy of God by becoming merciful, so we may hope to acquaint ourselves more fully with Him by listening to men far more merciful and gracious than ourselves. Such a man, a teacher such as this, now stands before us in the prophet who penned these words. (*Ibid.*) *A fatal delusion:*—If Satan ever smiles, it is surely when he sees the transgressor lay the flattering unction to his soul that he may take the devil's opiates, and take his own time for waking. (*Anon.*) *The peril of neglect:*—God hath promised pardon to the penitent, but He

hath not promised to-morrow to the negligent. (*Ambrose.*) *Missing the tide:*—Ian Maclaren writes of being at the seaside and of watching the fishing-boats as they returned in the evening. "They used to wait outside till the tide rose high enough for them to enter the harbour. One night a boat missed the entrance. The men were careless, or they did not tack properly. The others were all inside. A feeling of pity for that boat came over me just as if it had been a living creature. I rose at night to look out of the window. There it was—it had missed the tide. Men and women, the greatest tide that runs is the tide that carries us into the kingdom of God. The most splendid effort of wisdom within a man's power is to seize the tide when it is at its flow." *Opportunity:*—I remember one day as I went through the woods near Mount Hermon School, I heard bees, and asked what it meant. "Oh," said one of the men, "they are after the honey-dew." "What is that?" I asked. He gave me a chestnut leaf, and told me to put my tongue to it. I did so, and the taste was as sweet as honey. Upon inquiry I found that all up and down the Connecticut valley what they call "honey-dew" had fallen, so that there must have been altogether hundreds of tons of honey-dew in this region. Where it came from I don't know. It sometimes seems as if the honey-dew of Heaven has fallen for us, and if any one has not tasted its sweetness it is his own fault. (*D. L. Moody.*) "*Call ye upon Him while He is near:*"—In one sense God is always near us, but there is another kind of nearness. We may live in the same house with persons, and yet in sympathy, in mutual understanding and helpfulness, we may be as far away as if a Chinese wall was built between us. We cannot help them because we cannot get near them. So at times God is nearer to us than at others; we feel His presence; the heart is receptive. Then, of all times, we should seek the Lord. (*Christian Age.*) *Delay in seeking God:*—Seek God whilst thou canst not see Him; for when thou seest Him, thou canst not find Him. Seek Him by hope, and thou shalt find Him by faith. In the day of grace He is invisible, but near; in the Day of Judgment He is visible, but far off. (*Gregory.*) *The present all-important:*—Under each clock in a certain paint factory is hung a neat glass sign, reading, "Do It Now." It is the motto of the company, and serves to remind the *employés* that the present is the all-important time. (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) *The merciful God near, yet unrecognized:*—There is a story of a prodigal who came back from the far country and could not find his father's house. He wandered on and on, and at last, in the gathering night, sank down, heart-sick and faint, on the steps of a little cottage. Without knowing it, he was on his own father's door-step. Inside sat the aged father and mother, their hearts hungering for their long-lost boy. Outside, bowed and crushed and longing for love and for home, lay the weary, homesick son—on the very threshold of home, but not knowing it. So near to the gates of Heaven is every human soul that is penitent, weary of sin, longing for Divine mercy and love. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

Vers. 7–9. **Let the wicked forsake his way.**—*The way of return to God and its encouragements:*—1. Here there are apparently two things expressed—a negative and a positive, two lines of conduct expressed—a forsaking one way of living and the adoption of another, but in reality the two things are but one. They are two in thought and expression, but only one in conduct. The forsaking the wicked way and the wicked thought is no other than the returning with all our heart to God. You cannot separate them. If I were to say to a man going out to his day's work, "Now, do not go to the public-house this evening when you have done work, but return straight home to your wife and children," you will see that the two pieces of advice resolve themselves into one, and he would have only to go straight home from work to fulfil both duties. And so we can forsake no evil way or evil thought but by beginning to walk in the right way and cherishing the right thought. 2. There are two methods of forsaking evil ways and evil thoughts. The one by means of self-denial and self-repression when a man's conscience arrests him and sternly forbids him to continue any longer in his evil way of life, and he makes a strong resolve that he will root out the passion or the habit that has hitherto mastered him. Then a tremendous struggle begins between the spirit and the flesh, and by the force of sheer will he holds down the rebellious appetite. The sense of duty gives him strength for a time, but, alas! the tension of the will is too strained to last, and a rebound comes, and he says, "I cannot maintain the strife any longer. I must yield." The other method begins at a different point. Instead of fighting the evil in pitched battles, he seeks to conquer by diverting the mind into a different channel of activity, and awakening within himself a different order of sentiments and

affections. 3. You observe that the wicked is not only to forsake his way, but his thoughts also, so that the regeneration is to extend not only to the outward ways, but to the very inward thoughts of the mind, indicating how thorough and universal the change is to be. Now consider how firmly established men are in evil ways and evil thoughts, and how they delight in them, and how completely they are surrendered to their power. They do not want to change, and they do not believe they are capable of it. They say human nature is human nature, and that it is Utopian to expect men to give up ways of living common to all the world and to all the ages; and so they go on beating the everlasting round of human ways and human sin, till at length life becomes weary, and they die, and go we know not where. But there are some who are seized at intervals with better thoughts and nobler desires, who see before them a good in life after which they make convulsive snatches. 4. I want to point out to any who are lamenting their failures, who have tried to conquer themselves, but have sunk back defeated, what is the Divine method as pointed out in the Bible—both in the Old and in the New Testament. It is what I have called the positive method—not the direct, but the indirect and successful. Here it is called, Seeking the Lord while He may be found, calling upon Him while He is near, and a returning unto the Lord. Christ calls it a coming unto Him in our weariness, believing on Him so as to come into everlasting life. It is faith, the surrender of ourselves to Him, to His goodness, to His love, to His Spirit, and example, and will. (*C. Short, M.A.*) *The wicked*, whose name, in the Hebrew language, is derived from a word that signifies to be unquiet. This designation will agree with the turbulent dispositions for which people of this character are often remarkable. Unquiet is their name, and unquietness is with them. They cannot cease from sin, which renders them unstable and fluctuating, and ofttimes uneasy to themselves and troublesome to society. In contempt of God and His authority, they are restless and assiduous in the practice of iniquity. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Conversion*:—I. THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER is expressed in three degrees. 1. In the forsaking of wicked ways. 2. In the forsaking of evil thoughts. 3. In returning again to the Lord. II. THE CONDITION WHEREIN HE STANDS WHO HATH DONE ALL THIS is no state of merit, but of mercy; no, not so much as a little merit, but even abundant mercy. (*J. Mede.*) *An offer of mercy*:—I. THE COUNSEL: which is to amendment of life. 1. The act of aversion. (1) For his course. "Let the wicked forsake his way." (2) As it reaches to a man's mind. "The unrighteous man his thoughts." The law of God does reach to our thoughts for ordering and regulating them. The thoughts of men are the proper issue and emanation of their souls, and so for that reason more especially to be rectified in them. The thoughts are such as whereto the Gospel and ministry of the Word does especially extend itself (Heb. iv. 12; 2 Cor. x. 5). God Himself is a searcher and trier of the thoughts and inward man. 2. The act of conversion. "Let him return unto the Lord." This is the nature of true repentance—it is a turning from sin to God. II. THE PROMISE or argument to enforce this counsel and invitation. That is taken from God's readiness to the forgiveness of sin upon that condition. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Unrighteous thoughts*:—These evil thoughts which are to be forsaken may be ranked into three sorts. 1. As to matter of opinion. Take a man in his natural condition, and he has many strange conceits in his head, whilst he so remains (Rom. i. 21). (1) The thoughts of sin—when a man is converted he forsakes these. In his natural condition, he many times makes nothing of sin. "Fools make a mock of sin." (2) So, also, his thoughts of grace, and godliness and godly men. (3) So again, for his thoughts of God Himself, he must forsake these and think otherwise of Him. 2. As to matter of contemplation, he must forsake his thoughts here also. Take a carnal man, and where are all his thoughts? What is that which his mind does most run on? Why, upon the world, and the things of the world. 3. As to matter of contrivance and design. Wicked men, as they are full of vain meditations, so they are commonly full of sinful devices. And they are still laying a train for future wickedness in themselves—"making provisions for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." (*Ibid.*) *Divine counsels to the wicked*:—I. THE COUNSELLOR. The Father of the wicked is here speaking to the wicked. He who speaks knows every wicked man. He who speaks hates evil. He who speaks hath power to destroy the wicked in hell. He desireth not the death of one transgressor, but rather that he should turn unto Him and live. It is the redeeming God who is here addressing the wicked man. II. HIS COUNSEL. "Let the wicked forsake," etc. We have ways in common; but we have ways that are individual and peculiar to ourselves. Every man has his way of thinking, and reasoning, and imagining,

and feeling, and willing, and acting. Now, "the wicked setteth himself in a way that is not good," and God says, "Get out of it, forsake it." This advice is based upon the following facts. The way of the wicked and the thoughts of the unrighteous are absolutely wrong. They are injurious—injurious to the wicked man himself. Further, repentance now is possible; for the Son of the Father now speaking to the wicked man, is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. Further, God Himself seeks it. This advice requires—1. Self-inspection. It asks the wicked man to look at his way. It says to him, Look back—it has been a rough way, sometimes covered, it is true, with bright green grass, and with soft enticing moss; but the flints have come through it all, and have made the feet often bleed: so that if the wicked man will look back, he will find blood-marks on his way, an evidence that the way of transgressors is hard. The wicked man is not only to look at his way, but the unrighteous man at his thoughts. He is to consider his purposes. 2. The admission of truth as to the character of the way, and as to the nature of the thoughts. It is quite possible that a wicked man looking back, and seeing his path to be hard, will try to forget it. God says, admit the truth. 3. The resistance of an inclination to go on. 4. Submission to the conviction that the way is evil, and the abandonment of every unrighteous purpose, with actual departure from the path of open and actual transgression. It is just possible that in the midst of a multitude of transgressions, there is one master sin; and that master sin, it may be, the key-stone of all your transgressions. Take that away, and your habits of sinning are broken up. This advice requires appeal to God for mercy, and for help and reconciliation. III. THE COUNSELLED. If you take a Concordance and look through it at the word "wicked," I think you will be astonished to find how often the wicked are recognized in Holy Scripture, and men often talk about the wicked. But God and men do not always mean the same thing. Men unduly limit the application of this word. They call the immoral wicked, and only the immoral. Now hear what the Lord says in describing a wicked man. "God is not in all his thoughts;" so that he is a wicked man who does not recognize God in God's own world. IV. THE PROMISE OR ASSURANCE BY WHICH THIS ADVICE IS SANCTIONED AND SUSTAINED. It is like the promise made to faith; you must believe in order to realize the promise. It is like the promise made to repentance: you must repent in order to realize the promise. The promise is conditional; and yet, mark, it is sure. The promise is made, further, to characters. There is, therefore, an indefiniteness about it which may well encourage you. It is not necessary I should go into your wickedness, or that I should at all define or describe your thoughts. (*S. Martin.*) *The need and nature of conversion:*—This is not a merely legal demand; it is a Gospel demand, found in the centre of a Gospel chapter in the writings of the most evangelical of all the prophets. I. THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner. 1. This will be at once evident when I ask, How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for Him to put aside our past sin, and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before? 2. Neither is there a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable, that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins, and yet be saved. 3. Besides, our common-sense tells us that it would be highly dangerous to society if men were to be pardoned, and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. 4. Moreover, it would be a serious injury to the man himself. I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in the man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favourite of Heaven, and yet continues to indulge in sin. II. THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here? 1. It deals with the life. "Let the wicked forsake his way." It is "his way" that he is to forsake; that is his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, and propensities, and passions lead him. He must forsake this way, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years; he will have to get out of this way, however much he may delight in it. "I will tell you what I will do," says one; "I will still keep to my old way, but I will not travel quite so rapidly in it; I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell thee that thou must forsake that old way of thine altogether if thou wouldst be saved. "That is pretty strong language," says some one. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that—2. It deals with the man's thoughts. In thought, is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colourless; but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, and virus, and guilt into the

deed. As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud; his opinion about God, for instance. To the ungodly man it is often quite a treat to sit down, and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth, when he sowed his wild oats. We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all purposes of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here: "Let the unrighteous man forsake his purposes." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man, you are pleased that you have got away from your mother's apron strings, and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you. 3. The text further says, "and let him return unto the Lord," so that this conversion deals with the sinner in his relation to God. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. (1) You must begin to think about God. (2) Then you must yield to Him, give up your will to His will; and, doing that, you must pray to Him, cry to Him for mercy; and then you must trust Him. Especially, you must accept His way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. III. THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION. Possibly somebody says, "You have been preaching to us the law, sir." No, I have not. The law says nothing about repentance. The law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is not the utterance of law, but of the Gospel. 1. The Gospel of it lies in the fact that God has promised that He will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways. 2. Not only does God bid men turn to Him, but He enables them to turn to Him; so the Gospel of this passage is, that God the Holy Ghost is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts, and then in their lives. 3. Jesus Christ Himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in Him. 4. God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *From desert to garden:*—This verse leaves nothing unsaid that needs to be said to the inquiring soul. In simple and orderly declaration, it lays before us the whole fact of human responsibility and Divine promise concerning man's salvation. We shall best understand our text by seeing its relation to the context. This chapter is a perfect prophetic message in itself. Intimately related to that which has preceded it, vitally connected with that which is to follow, it may yet be taken as one direct utterance of the prophet of God to people living under certain conditions of life. The chapter presents a remarkable and striking contrast. The conditions described in the first part are utterly different from those described in the last. The figures made use of are different. Mark the condition of life to which the prophet was addressing himself. "Every one that thirsteth," "he that hath no money," "ye spend money for that which is not bread," "your labour for that which satisfieth not," "a people who are thirsty, and hungry, and hard-working, and never satisfied." Towards the close of the chapter, different conditions are described:—"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace" (vers. 12, 13). You see the contrast. In the one case you have the desert, in the other the garden; in the one, hot, restless, dissatisfied life; in the other, joy, peace, singing. In each the language is figurative, but figurative of a very positive condition of life. But how can I get from the desert into the garden? Half-way through this chapter, by a coincidence of arrangement, in the central verse, is the gateway through which a man may leave the desert and get into the garden. "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. In this verse I have the perfect laying out of the plan of salvation. In an analysis of the verse I discover the philosophy of salvation, and in the structure of the verse I find the simple programme of salvation. There are two parts to this verse. I. SOMETHING FOR MAN TO DO. Here are three things the prophet declares to be necessary. They are not three, but one; each merges into the other, and it is only as the final one is obeyed that the former ones are obeyed; and yet let us take them in their sequence. 1. "Let the wicked forsake his way." 2. "The unrighteous man his thoughts." 3. "Let him return unto the Lord." As a matter of fact, the prophet here is beginning in the outer reaches of life, passing to the inner circle, until he comes to the central fact of man's nature. We will begin in this outer court. The Hebrew word translated "way" at this point means a beaten track, the way along which a man habitually walks; and it is used figuratively in Hebrew writings of the general set and direction of a man's life, and the prophet says that the first thing a man has to do if he

is to come back into the garden is to leave his way, the outward set, and direction of his life. Then he comes to another word, "Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts," and the Hebrew word here means literally a web, figuratively a plan, a conception, an ideal. So that the prophet now has come to something deeper than the outward set of a man's life. He is to give that up by giving up his inward conception of life. And how is a man to give up his outward way and the inward conception, and why is a man to give up his outward way, and his inward conception? He is to give it up by returning to the Lord, and he is to give it up because it is not the Lord's way and the Lord's thought. Notice what immediately follows this seventh verse. In the Authorized Version, at ver. 8, there is a paragraph mark that we need to dispense with. The paragraph mark is put in to indicate the fact that the prophet there begins a new subject. As a matter of fact, he does nothing of the sort; he goes right on with the same subject. Here we are touching the fundamental question of sin. When the prophet calls a man to forsake his way, it is not that he asks him to give up drinking, or thieving, or lying, or impurity. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." That is the essence of sin. The essential trouble is not that a man drinks, or swears; it is that he has elected to go his own way, instead of God's way. The underlying root sin of humanity is rebellion against the government of God. That sin may manifest itself in vulgar forms, against which we sign pledges; or it may manifest itself in the cultured and refined paganism that attempts to live without prayer and without worship. I will tell you, in the name of God, what is the trouble in your life! It is godless, that is the trouble. I will tell you why you are in the desert. You have turned your back upon God. I will tell you why you are never satisfied with water or bread. It is because you have left the place of intimate and first-hand relationship to God. Do you want to get from the desert, back to God? Forsake your way; take His. Give up your thought; take His. "But," says some man in his pride, "why should I give up my way, and take God's way? And why should I give up my thought, and take God's thought?" Go right on, and see what the prophet says (ver. 8). God's thought for you is the thought of Heaven. Yours is the thought of earth. God thinks infinitely more of you than you think of yourself. Yours is a degraded estimate of your own life. Will you say, "Yes, that is true, I will return to the Lord." Then I know immediately your face is set toward God's high conception, toward God's great highway, the next consciousness will be that of your sin, the wasted years will come sweeping back upon you like an avalanche. If, indeed, thou art at this wicket gate, and thy face is set back toward God, then hear the evangel, "He will have mercy. He will abundantly pardon." II. SOMETHING THAT GOD WILL DO. You are to do what He tells you, and He will do what He promises. You are to obey; that is repentance. You are to trust Him; that is faith. That is the whole programme of salvation. (*G. C. Morgan, D.D.*) *The way to pardon:*—I. A VIVID PORTRAIT. 1. It introduces the man of evil deeds. 2. We have likewise the portrait of the man of unholy purposes. What a mirror the text holds up to society! II. AN EARNEST EXHORTATION. 1. "Let the wicked forsake," etc. The sinner is required to forsake, to abandon his sin. 2. "Let him return unto the Lord." The sinner lives abnormally, unnaturally. He is a prodigal away from home, a wandering sheep beyond the protection of the fold, a lost piece of silver. Hence religion is a return to God, to first relations, to natural courses of behaviour. Sinners are like wandering stars escaped from their orbit. Conversion restores them to their proper place in the onward sweep of the Divine purpose. The text is a disclosure of the nature of true repentance and of saving faith. III. AN EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISE. 1. "And He will have mercy upon him." Mercy is God's wealth. "Rich in mercy." 2. "Abundantly pardon." What music is in these words! (*Homiletic Review.*) *Repentance:*—In the exhortation to repentance in ver. 7, both sides of the μετάνοια find expression—the forsaking of sinful selfishness, and return to the God of salvation. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Repentance:*—I. THE OBLIGATIONS TO AN EARLY REPENTANCE. II. THE TRUE NATURE OF REPENTANCE. (*J. Taylor, LL.D.*) *The surrender of the thoughts:*—Another thing we have to give up, and which is harder, I think, than giving up the will and the way, is our thoughts. Most men have their thoughts about the way in which they are to be saved. Because God does not convert them in the way they have planned, or think He should, they think they cannot be saved. Man thinks he can repent when he is sick and about to die. He thinks that is better than repenting in early life; and some go further and say, "I think a man can repent after death; I think there will be another chance if he

misses his chance in this life." And another class says, "I think we are all going to be saved; the pure with the impure are all going to be swept into the Kingdom of God." That is man's thought; but that is not God's thought. Man thinks he can be saved by works. God's thoughts are altogether different. It is to him that worketh not, but believeth. After a man is born into the Kingdom of God, he ought to show his faith by works; but we do not work for salvation. Others think that you must be saved by ordinances. Ordinances are all right in their place; but when you come to put ordinances in the place of salvation, that is a great mistake. Some people say, "I should like very much to get rid of my sins, and if I could get rid of them I would come to Christ." Here a great many fall into a pit. If we could get rid of our sins, we should not want a Saviour. It is because we cannot get rid of our sins that we need to come to Christ. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The moral disparity between man's thoughts and ways, and God's thoughts and ways, an argument for a moral change on man's part:*—I. GOD HAS ENDOWED MAN WITH CAPACITIES TO ACT IN SOME MEASURE LIKE HIMSELF, INASMUCH AS BOTH HAVE THEIR "THOUGHTS AND WAYS." 1. God has His thoughts—thoughts about Himself—the universe; about all actualities and possibilities. Some of His thoughts have been embodied and their forms destroyed, centuries ago. Some are now embodied in creation, in historical events, in redemption, etc. Some are yet to be embodied in new universes, etc. And some will never take form. There is an infinite ocean of thought in the Divine mind that has never yet taken form, and never will. 2. God has His ways. He has settled methods of action. He has a method of creating, governing, destroying, and saving. Hence science and art, which imply settled methods. 3. Man has his thoughts. He is full of thought, of some sort or other; he thinks by a necessity of his nature; his power to think is the glory of his nature. 4. Man too has his ways. He has his methods of doing things. II. BETWEEN THE THOUGHTS AND WAYS OF WICKED AND UNRIGHTEOUS MEN AND THOSE OF GOD THERE IS AN IMMENSE MORAL DISPARITY. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," etc. We say moral disparity, for natural disparity must exist by an eternal necessity. We may mention two points of moral difference. One in relation to being in general, and the other in relation to enemies. 1. As to the former, God's thoughts and ways are concerned for the general happiness, those of wicked men for personal ends. 2. As to the latter, God's thoughts are concerned for the pardon of the offender, those of the wicked for punishment. (1) God graciously offers pardon to the offender. Do the wicked do so? (2) God graciously offers pardon to offenders much beneath Him. Do the wicked do so? (3) God graciously offers pardon to offenders who have repeatedly rejected His overtures. Do the wicked do so? (4) God graciously offers pardon through a wonderful sacrifice—His Son. Would the wicked do so? III. THE MORAL DISPARITY BETWEEN THE THOUGHTS AND WAYS OF WICKED MEN AND THOSE OF GOD RENDERS A CHANGE ON THE PART OF THE FORMER URGENTLY NECESSARY. "Let the wicked," etc. Why? Because "My thoughts," etc. Two thoughts are implied here, and will show the strength of this reason. 1. A moral disparity of thought and way between the creature and the Creator is eternally incompatible with the creature's well-being. God's thoughts and ways are the resistless forces of the universe. He who thinks and acts contrary battles against every wind and wave of being and the mighty Spirit in all. He must be crushed. 2. The removal of this disparity will never take place by any change on God's part. The words imply this, and it is a great truth. God cannot change, and there is no need for Him to change. Here, then, is the argument; if a moral disparity exists, and if the removal is essential to our well-being, and if God cannot change, "let the wicked," etc. IV. THIS GREAT CHANGE ON THE PART OF THE WICKED IS ENCOURAGED BY THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD WILL MERCIFULLY DEAL WITH HIM ON HIS RETURN. "He will have mercy on him;" "He will abundantly pardon." (*Homilist.*) *God's ways and man's ways:*—I. WHY, IN SO FAR AS GOD'S NATURE DIFFERS FROM MAN'S, HE MAY BE SUPPOSED LESS LIKELY TO FORGIVE. 1. God knows us more thoroughly than any human being; He knows the worst of us, and He knows the great hidden element of character which is only occasionally betrayed. 2. He knows the motives, and knows that there are bad motives even for good actions. 3. He judges our sins by an infinitely higher standard than man's. II. WHY GOD IS, JUST BECAUSE OF THAT DIFFERENCE, INFINITELY MORE LIKELY TO FORGIVE. 1. Among men the best and purest are not the severest censors and judges, for human goodness is the more merciful in proportion as it approaches nearer to perfection. 2. In God there is no personal irascibility or resentment. Christ's life on earth was the story of a long,

silent, immovable patience, of absolute lifelong superiority to personal feeling. 3. Although to justice or righteousness it is some satisfaction that a bad man should be miserable, yet it is another nobler and sweeter satisfaction that he should become a good man. (*J. Caird, D.D.*) *Pardon for the penitent:*—We find in the text—I. AN EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE. Here, in few words, we are given plainly to understand in what genuine repentance consists. II. THE PROMISE OF PARDON ANNEXED TO THE EXHORTATION. If the wicked will forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him, and will abundantly pardon him. Repentance is here enjoined as a prerequisite to pardon. And do not other passages of Scripture speak the same language? We must not, however, suppose that there is anything meritorious in our repentance. It possesses no virtue or efficacy to expiate our guilt. It is our bounden duty, but it makes no compensation for past failures, no atonement for past transgressions. It is itself the gift of God, who has exalted His beloved Son to be a Prince and a Saviour, in order to bestow it on the rebellious. It can therefore deserve nothing. Nevertheless, it is to the penitent alone that God extends His pardoning mercy. Why? It would be enough to answer, that such is the good pleasure of His will; but we can also add, that the penitent alone is qualified to receive and appreciate the blessing. But it may be asked, How can God be favourable to the sinner? For an answer we must turn to the Gospel of His grace, which alone informs us how He can be a just God and yet a Saviour. III. AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO LAY HOLD OF THE PROMISE. What answer do you make? 1. Some one, perhaps, in the brokenness of his heart may reply, "Yes, I must believe that God is indeed merciful and gracious. I perceive also that He can, in the Son of His love, be a just God and a Saviour. But, alas! my sins have been so numerous that, though He may forgive others, I cannot persuade myself He will extend pardon to me." But what saith God? "My thoughts are not your thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts." 2. "But," says another, "my sins have been not only numerous, but highly aggravated." If you had sinned so often and so heinously against your fellow-creatures, you might well despair of forgiveness. It is too much, alas! our way to retaliate evil for evil. But "your ways are not My ways," etc. 3. I seem to hear a third in anguish of spirit exclaiming, "I am one of those awful characters known in Scripture by the name of backsliders." The words here translated "abundantly pardon," are rendered on the margin "multiply to pardon." The Lord will pardon, not once only, but again, and again, and again. Conclusion: It is painful to think that any one should be so wicked, and so lost to every grateful feeling, as to pervert such a subject. Yet it is a fact that many are guilty of so doing. There are two characters especially who come under this charge. One of them is the hardened and impenitent transgressor, who takes encouragement to proceed in his sinful career from the consideration that God is merciful, and will not fail to pardon him at the last. 2. The other is the antinomian professor of religion, who professes to know God, but in works denies Him, and endeavours to lull conscience to rest by extolling His sovereign and superabounding grace. The grace of God was never meant to embolden us in a course of transgression; nor does it ever produce this effect on those who know it in truth. (*D. Rees.*) *Refuge in God's mercy:*—There is a story of a man who dreams he is out in an open field in a fierce, driving storm. He is wildly seeking a refuge. He sees one gate over which "Holiness" is written. There seems to be shelter inside, and he knocks. The door in opened by one in white garments, but none, save the holy, can be admitted; and he is not holy. So he hurries on to seek shelter elsewhere. He sees another gate and tries that, but "Truth" is inscribed above it, and he is not fit to enter. He hastens on to a third, which is the palace of Justice; but armed sentinels keep the door, and only the righteous can be received. At last, when he is almost in despair, he sees a light shining some distance away and hastens toward it. The door stands wide open, and beautiful angels meet him with welcomes of joy. It is the house of Mercy, and he is taken in and finds refuge from the storm and is hospitably entertained. None of us can ever find a refuge at any door, save at the door of Mercy. But here the vilest sinner can find eternal shelter; and not mere cold shelter only, for God's mercy is tender. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) He will abundantly pardon.—*Pardoning mercy abundant:*—I. THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S PARDONING MERCY IS EVINCED BY THE REMOVAL OF THE OBSTACLES TO ITS EXERCISE. It was not by annihilating sin—by scattering our iniquities in the regions of oblivion with no evidence of the Divine abhorrence—that the way is open for their remission. But

God laid upon His Son the iniquities of us all. II. THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S PARDONING MERCY MAY BE ARGUED FROM HIS BENEVOLENCE. The goodness of God —*i. e.* His whole character—is intent on the promotion of the greatest good. When this end demands the punishment of sin, this goodness dictates it, and in this consists what we call justice. When this end is the pardon of the sinner, the same goodness dictates it, and in this consists mercy. III. THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S PARDONING MERCY MAY BE EVINCED FROM THE RICHES OF HIS FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING. Consider—1. The objects of the Divine forbearance; a world, our whole species in rebellion. 2. Its design; their repentance and salvation with eternal glory. 3. Its circumstances; how easy for Omnipotence to break the thread that holds us over the pit, and yet He spares us—He spares sinners, while He regards them with all the abhorrence that is due to sin—He spares them, while He can glorify Himself in their instant and eternal destruction—He spares them, when in the midst of great and repeated provocations, when, from the very patience of God, they derive only hardihood in rebellion—He spares them that He may use every possible means for their conversion and salvation. He comes to them in His Word and in His providence; by the chastisements and the bounties of His hand; by every moment's preservation; in the counsels and prayers and example of the pious; in visible displays of His eternal power and Godhead; by the heralds of the Cross, who warn them night and day with tears; in the opened gates of heaven, and the uncovered mouth of the pit; in full displays of the beauty and glory and sufficiency of an incarnate Saviour. Why these efforts to bring to repentance, if He has no mercy for the penitent? (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Abundant pardon:*—The certainty of their finding pardon was the tempting bait with which this ancient fisher of souls endeavoured to "catch men." I. GOD DOES ABUNDANTLY PARDON. We will turn that truth over and over, and see it in many lights. 1. The pardon of God may well be abundant, for it wells up from an infinite fountain; "mercy, which endureth for ever." 2. The objects to which this pardon has been extended are abundant too. Well is it said, "He will abundantly pardon," for God has already pardoned sinners more numerous than can be estimated by human arithmetic. 3. His pardon is abundant when we consider the abundance of the sins which the love of God blots out. (1) Sins of thought—rebellious thoughts, proud thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, atheistical thoughts, covetous thoughts, lustful thoughts, impatient thoughts, cruel thoughts, false thoughts, thoughts of ill memory, and dreams of an unholy future; what swarms are there! Moreover, the omission of thoughts which should have been, such as thoughts of repentance, gratitude, reverence, faith, and the like, these are equally numerous: with the double list my roll is written within and without with a hideous catalogue. As the gnats which swarm the air at eventide, so numerous are the transgressions of the mind. (2) Sins of word. What words have vexed the pure and holy ear of God! Words against Himself, against His Son, against His law and Gospel, against our neighbour, against everything that is good and true! Words proud and hectoring, words defiant and obstinate, words untruthful, words lascivious, words of vanity, and words of wilful unbelief. (3) Sins of deed, which in very truth are but the fruits which grow out of sins of thought. (4) Perhaps the sins we do not know are more numerous than the sins we are conscious of. Conscience may not be properly enlightened, and hence many a thing may not seem to be sinful which really is so; but God's clear eye perceiveth everything that is obnoxious to His holy law. Innumerable sins are forgiven by one word from the lips of Divine love. 4. We can see the truth of this in the abundant sin of those sins which are pardoned. Did you ever find a spider's nest just when the young spiders have all come to life, it is a city of spiders; now, such is any one sin, it is a colony of iniquities, a living mass of offence. In addition to there being many sins in one sin, I want you to remember how much virus of sin we sometimes manage to stow away in a sin. A man has done wrong and smarted for it, yet he does the very same thing again wilfully, against his own conscience and against the warning he has received. A man will sometimes acknowledge what a fool he has been, and yet play the fool again. Some men sin for no motive whatever—for mere wantonness of sin. 5. The Lord "abundantly pardons," when we consider the abundant means of pardon which he has been ever pleased to provide for sinners. 6. The abundant ease of the terms of pardon. "Let the wicked forsake," etc., that is all! No man can expect to be forgiven if he goes on with his sin. 7. The abundance of this pardon may be seen in the fulness of it. 8. He doth "abundantly pardon," because of the abundant blessings which attend that pardon. II. THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW OUT OF ABUNDANT PARDON. 1. There is no room for anybody to despair.

2. There is a loud call to every one who has not repented to do so; for who would be so base as to offend so good, so kind a Lord? 3. If there is anybody in this house the text especially calls, it is the biggest sinner here; because there cannot be abundant pardon where there is not abundant sin. 4. For such a forgiving God we ought in return to have great love. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Mohammedism or Christianity:*—I have heard men say, often, Why is it Jesus Christ has so few disciples? The Gospel has been preached for 1,800 years, and yet Mohammed has more disciples than Jesus Christ. The question is very easily answered. A man can be a follower of Mohammed, and not give up his sin. He may be a follower of Confucius without giving up his sin; and the reason Jesus Christ has so few disciples is that men are not willing to part with their sin. If men could only get into the Kingdom of God without giving up anything, they would push into it by the thousand. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Free pardon:*—When I was preaching in Yorkshire at some mission services, a collier came to me at the close of one of the services, and said to me, "I would like to be a Christian, but I cannot receive what you have said to-night." I said, "My brother, why not?" He said, "I would give anything to believe that God would forgive my sin; but I cannot believe He will just forgive it if I turn to Him. It is too cheap." I looked at him, and I said, "My dear friend, have you been to work to-day?" "Yes." "Where have you been working?" He looked at me slightly astonished, and said, "I was down in the pit, as usual." "How did you get home?" "Oh, I walked home along the road." "But how did you get out of the pit?" "The way I always do. I got into the cage, and I was pulled up to the top." "How much did you pay to come out of the pit?" He looked at me astonished, and said, "Pay? Of course, I don't pay anything." I said to him, "Were you not afraid to trust yourself in that cage? Was it not too cheap?" "Oh, no," he said. "It was cheap for me, but it cost the company a lot of money to sink that shaft." And without another word the truth of that admission broke upon him, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and he saw if he could have salvation without money and without price, it had cost the Infinite God a great price to sink that shaft and rescue lost men. (*G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **For My thoughts are not your thoughts.**—*God's thoughts:*—The thought of God! Who can fathom it? Astronomers tell us of stars in the sky at such infinite distances that their light, shooting through space at the inconceivable rate of 185,000 miles a second, would require 3,500 years to reach this earth. And yet God's thought placed them thus far away in space, arranged the laws that govern them, not unlikely has set whirling around them planets like our own, peopled with sentiment and responsible beings like ourselves. To such distance reach the thoughts of God with the same clearness and wisdom as on this little globe. Shall not these thoughts, piercing the sublime avenues of infinite space, find a way whereby we may be saved? (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The thoughts of God:*—We can form some conception of them through the works of His hand, whether in nature, providence, or redemption. The psalmist describes them as permanent in their endurance; as surpassing the reckoning of human arithmetic; and as being a fathomless deep. It is told of Kepler that, one night, after hours spent in observing the motions of the heavenly bodies, he exclaimed, "I have been thinking over again the earliest thoughts of God." But there are earlier thoughts than those impressed on nature. The love that led to the choice of man in Christ, and will culminate in the glory, is older far. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God a thinker:*—"I think, therefore I am," was the formula in which the great mind of Descartes found peace. We may reverently adapt it, and say, "God thinks, therefore God is;" and the proof that He thinks is the great universe around us bearing everywhere the marks of a designing hand. The quality of any mind is determined by its product. The rare quality of the mind of Shakespeare found expression in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," that of Milton in "Paradise Lost," and that of Tennyson in the "Idylls of the King." Stephenson demonstrated the wonderful mechanical power of his brain in the production of the steam engine, and Edison has shown what he thinks by inventing the telephone and phonograph. You stand and gaze with reverential awe at St. Paul's, with its lofty dome, its magnificent portico, its beautiful windows. What is it? A church. Yes, a church in the heart of the busiest city in the world; a constant witness to the hurrying, bargain-making crowd, that man does not live by bread alone. It is a fine building—a veritable poem in stone—begrimed by the smutty fingers of old Father Time, but

strangely weird and solemn, as I have seen it bathed in the moonlight, with the mighty city sleeping around it, silent and still, or at least as still as London ever is. It is one of the peep-holes through which London gets a view of Heaven. But it is something more. It is the visualized thought of a great man; mute witness to the fact that mind is the great thing in the world. Sir Christopher Wren thought cathedrals, they were on his brain, he saw them before a single stone was laid, and then he selected one and put it on paper and said to the builder, "Now go to work. Put this thought of mine in stone, and let it stand there in the midst of the city, so that all men may see the kind of thing my brain is capable of producing." So this world, so full of wondrous forms and lovely colours, is but the outward expression of the thought of God. (*S. Horton.*) *Man, like God, a thinker:*—1. The power of thought is one point in which man is made in the image of God. Other animated creatures which are put in subjection to the thinking, intelligent creature man, have no fellowship with God in thought; into His world of pure spirit they cannot enter. When men do not think, and especially when they do not think of the highest and most important matters, they degrade themselves from the true position and occupation of immortal minds. 2. In the text we have two persons thinking; and as the result—man's thoughts and God's thoughts. God's thinkings are declared by Himself to be exceedingly above man's, and yet if ever man is to dwell with God, he must think as God thinks. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" What, then, can I do to rise to Him? Think as much as I please, thinking only sets me on my feet, and so far does me service, but it still leaves me on the earth, and God is yonder far above me, and my thoughts can no more attain unto Him than an infant can touch the stars with his finger. Still it is a comfort to me if I am sincerely thoughtful after God, that He is thinking about me, for if my thoughts cannot bear me up to Him, His thoughts can bring Him down to me, and when He has established a connection between the heaven which is above me and the earth which is beneath Himself, then I, laying hold on His thoughts, and believing what He has thought out for me, shall be drawn up to His elevation, and I shall come to think His thoughts, and so to be in communion with the Most High. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God forgiving sin:*—At first, men have very low ideas of sin. But when the Holy Spirit begins to deal with them, sin grows to be an intolerable burden, a fearsome thing. While the thought of sin becomes clear, the thought of pardon is not, at first, so clear. Sin is great, and for that reason the sinner thinks it cannot be pardoned, as if he measured the Lord by his sin. In our text God in condescension helps the sinner to believe in pardon by elevating his idea of God. Because God is infinitely superior to man, He can abundantly pardon. I. YOUR OWN THOUGHTS JUDGE PARDON TO BE IMPOSSIBLE. 1. To some it seems impossible that there can be forgiveness for them, because of some special, secret, gross, and grievous sin. Most persons, when they remember their past lives, see a certain spot blacker than the rest. 2. To others the difficulty of pardon seems to lie not so much in some special offence, as in the number of their sins, and the long continuance of them. 3. Others have been grievously oppressed with the idea that they could not be pardoned because of the wilfulness of what they have done. Certainly this is a very grievous evil. Wilfulness is the very damnableness of sin. 4. "Sir," says one, "I sinned with a great falseness and treachery of heart; for I was baptized and joined a Church." 5. I hear one say, "There is about my sin this peculiar heinousness, that I have injured myself and others by my sin." 6. Perhaps one may even say, "But, sir, my sin was of this kind, that I dishonoured God: I denied the Deity of Christ." II. GOD'S THOUGHTS OF OTHER THINGS ARE FAR ABOVE YOURS. It is quite certain that the best thoughts—the most logical thoughts, the most original thoughts, the most correct thoughts you have ever had—are not worthy to be compared with God's thoughts. Look in nature. The things you see in nature were, at first, thoughts in God's mind, and He embodied them. Did you ever think such thoughts as God has thought in creation? God's thoughts in providence—how wonderfully they are above ours! You read history, and everything seems to be a tangle. Yet, before you have read through the chapter, you see in it all a plan and a method. It has ever been so in your own mind as to the future. Read the prophecies, and see what is yet to be. III. HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT PARDON ARE ABOVE YOURS. 1. Are you not slow to forgive? "He delighteth in mercy." 2. You come to an end of your forgiveness before long. But God goes on to seventy times seventy times—on, and on, and on, and never comes to the end of pardoning mercy so long as a soul cries to Him for forgiveness. 3. Some things you find it hard to forgive.

God does far more in the way of pardon than we ask or even think. 4. I am afraid I must say of some of you that you forgive, but you do not forget. God promises to forget our iniquities. "I will cast all their sins behind My back." "I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea. They shall not be remembered against them any more for ever." 5. We forgive, and yet feel some returns of anger. "I have blotted out," says He, "thy transgressions." Once blotted out, they are done with for ever. 6. I do not slander you when I say that you are not very eager to pardon. He, the offended One, seeks the offender and proposes to make peace with him. 7. Do you think that any of us would suffer much for the sake of being able to forgive another? Should there be a very serious difficulty in the way, so that you cannot rightly forgive without some atonement being made, would you make the atonement yourself? IV. GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE ABOVE YOURS IN ALL THINGS WHICH CONCERN HIS GRACE. See the first verse as to the freeness of His grace. Your thought is that you can get nothing without paying for: God's thoughts are, "Come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." But you think that if God were to save you He would perform it in a second-rate style. Not He! He will have no niggard salvations. If He supplies His people, it shall be most richly and freely. Listen to this: "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is not a sip of the water, or a crust of the bread, or a drop of the milk; but when Christ invites poor sinners to come, He invites them to a high festival. You that are the guiltiest may come to Christ, and be among the happiest and the best of His saints. Nobody would ever imagine that a sinner could ever enter into covenant with God—that God should strike hands with guilty men, and pledge Himself to grace. Listen to this: "Incline your ear, and come unto Me," etc. (ver. 3). I remember a man, shut up in prison, under a long sentence, and he was so violent that he was put into a solitary cell. The chaplain had done all he could as to bringing him to repentance; but one day he read to him this verse, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." The man said, "I never heard of such a thing. Can God make a covenant with such a wretch as I am? Sir," said he, "it will break my heart;" and it did break his heart and he became a new man in Christ Jesus under the power of that amazing thought, that God would enter into covenant with such a wretch as he was. In ver. 5 Christ is said to call a people so ignorant that they did not know Him. This is to be His glory, that He is to call them by His grace. It is not one of your thoughts, but one of the thoughts of God, that He will glorify Christ in the saving of great sinners. "Ah, well!" says one, "I will go home, and cry to God for mercy." That is your thought. Listen to God's thought. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." Ah! still you think, "How can I be pardoned?" Listen to this, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," etc. Read the rest of the chapter, and say to yourself, over each verse, "This was not my thought; this was not my way." End all your doubts with the last verse, "Instead of the thorn," etc. (*Ibid.*)

The Greatness of God:—Until we believe in the greatness of God, not only in action, but in thought, we shall misunderstand our Bibles, the world in which we live, and ourselves. We use such words as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, infinite, but how little we grasp their meaning! They are but the poor, etymological husks in which we try to thrust that which no words can express. There are some things that you cannot describe, you can only feel. Language is too poor, too clumsy a medium to express God's best, or biggest things, much less to describe Him. It is like the colours with which the artist tries to reproduce the glory of a sunset. It is not a reproduction; at best, it is but a far-off resemblance. You look up on a cloudless day and there is not one speck, not one bit of white cloud against the vast expanse of undimmed azure, and yet feel, but cannot describe the infinity of space. Let that feeling of infiniteness rest upon you, soak into your mind, for it is good for man, the creature of a day, the heir of eternity, to linger amongst great expanses, and to learn that his geography is but a petty science, and his astronomy, with its measurements of millions of miles, does but nibble at the edge of the great universe of God. Thus you will preserve a reverent spirit, keep alive the faculties of wonder and admiration, and it is to be hoped be saved from the positive assertion of little narrow dogmas which have been adopted by certain sections of the Church, and declared with as much assurance, and fought for with as much bitterness, as though an angel from heaven had proclaimed them every

morning since the creation. (*S. Horton.*) *God's thoughts higher than man's:*—Theology ought to be the science of God and Divine things. Often it is systematized misrepresentations of Divine things. It is not the revelation of God's greatness, but of man's littleness; it starts with theories, instead of facts. Our text is God's appeal against human misrepresentation. There is always a danger of putting our own limitations of thoughts and speech upon the Almighty, and of making our thinking and doing the measure of His. Have we not all met with the man who sees nothing in the Church but bricks and timber, in its devotions only so many needful exercises to be got through as speedily as possible, and in the great redemption plan nothing but convenient fire escape from the miseries of hell, and in God only a High Commissioner of Police? It is vastly important that, as far as it is possible, we should get right ideas of God, for our whole character and conduct will be coloured by our thoughts of Him. And though it must ever be that our thoughts are as much beneath His thoughts as the earth is beneath the heavens, yet if He reveal Himself to us, as He is always willing to do to the humble soul, we shall at least be saved from those mental caricatures of Him that have darkened many a life, and been the fruitful soil in which unbelief has found its foothold. 1. The setting of the text takes us at once to the central doctrine of the Christian faith. The verse before it proclaims the pardon of God for the sinner, who, repenting of his sins, returns to the Lord. How can a sinless God forgive a sinful man, and yet maintain the majesty of His own law? And there rises before our eyes at once the form of a cross, and on it One, who, struggling in the death agony, exclaims, "It is finished." All the wonder and mystery of the ages gathers round that cross. If you can explain that you can explain all. Was it possible for sin to take upon itself a deeper shade of guilt than the sin of the people of Judah in Isaiah's time? Crimson-hued and scarlet-dyed, what could even God do with such sinners as these? Sweep them away with the strength of His right arm. Yea, and all heaven and all earth would approve the justice of the sentence. But He can do something else. He can forgive them. At first we revolt at the very idea. Forgiveness for them! And then once more we hear the voice which says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." "I will never forgive him" is the language of the man who has been wronged. But God says, "I will give My best and dearest if I may but win the wrong-doer to love that which is good. I will save him by showing him what love can do." Do you know it is the hardest thing in the world to persuade men to believe that God loves them with a love like that? There is a good deal of truth in the sarcasm of a scoffing French writer "that man has made God in his own image." 2. Let us apply our text to the many problems that gather round our life, to those many difficulties behind which as yet we can see no meaning. Life for many is a prolonged agony. It is a burden, a pain, a puzzle to which we have not yet the key. Behind the pain, and the tears, and the smart, God is, and His plan for us is the best possible plan. He is but a poor shallow fool who says, I will accept nothing that I cannot understand. As a matter of fact he is always accepting what he does not understand. Does he understand sleep? Does he understand why a seed grows? why a child thinks? why men die? And yet there are many men who reject the idea of a personal God because they cannot understand His works and ways. They declare life to be without purpose, and an aimless consciousness between two eternities. To all such our text is a rebuke. Faith is a bird of stronger wing than reason. Two texts are sufficient for me. Upon them I stake all for time and for eternity. "God is very great." "God is love." Socrates has put our belief once and for all into a convenient formula, "What God is I know not; what He is not I know." God is not, cannot be cruel. God is not, cannot be pitiless. God is not, cannot be making useless experiments at our expense. Without that faith, how could we face the hopeless poverty, the misery of our slums? Oh! wearied heart, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. When faith falters, when the sun goes out in darkness, when the storm beats loud and fierce, when over a coffin-lid hope drops its head and weeps, wait for God. Give Him time to discover Himself. It is at the midnight hour that Christ walks on the tempest-lashed sea. Hush all your questionings and wait; simply wait. Is that easy? No; it is the hardest thing of all to do; but wait, only wait. What we cannot know—what it would not be wise for us to know now—we shall know hereafter. (*Ibid.*) *God's thoughts and ways:*—I. SPECIFY SOME INSTANCES IN WHICH THIS DECLARATION IS STRIKINGLY ILLUSTRATED. 1. In His production of the most stupendous results from insignificant causes. Nature abounds with illustrations. Providence is still more abundant. Consequences the most stupendous, involving the destinies of

individuals, of families, of empires, have arisen out of causes which we deem insignificant. But the most abundant proofs are derived from the history of the Gospel. Our Lord has suggested this view of the subject in His own illustrations—"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed," and so on. And this is an illustration of the rise and progress of Messiah's Gospel. Who, and what was the Founder of the Gospel—as to His human appearance? 2. In the accomplishment of the most glorious designs by the weakest and most insignificant instruments. Who were the first propagators of the Gospel? In what school were they educated? With what armour did they go forth to the war? 3. In the sovereign exercises of His grace, in connection with its freedom and fulness. II. ASSIGN SOME REASONS FOR THIS. 1. His knowledge is more extensive than our information. 2. His judgment is more accurate than our decisions. 3. His purposes and plans are uninfluenced by our prejudices and passions. 4. It is His determination to humble pride, and His fixed resolution that no creature should glory in His presence. III. LEARN LESSONS OF HUMILITY, GRATITUDE, AND CONFIDENCE. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *God's thoughts:*—The word "thought" is used here objectively. It expresses a result and not a process. I. ILLUSTRATION. Here we need only contrast the human with the Divine style of thinking. Observe some particulars:—1. Creation. The visible creation that surrounds us on every side and spreads away into immensity beyond us, is only an embodied thought of the infinite, uncreated Intelligence. Tell me if it be at all like one of man's thoughts. Equip man with omnipotence, and set him to create a universe—and would it resemble the universe as it is? By no means! (1) Man's universe would be absolutely consolidated. Into one immense continent would all these world-islands be cast, and all tribes and types of life inhabit it as a common dwelling! His agonizing regret this day is that he cannot fling the line of a mighty telegraph from star to star, and thus, even in face of the immutable ordinances of heaven, gather these isolated islands of life into one vast virtual consolidation! (2) A universe projected by man would be motionless and steadfast. We build our homes, not on the waters, that they may be locomotive, but on the shore, that they may be fixed. But God's universe is in everlasting motion. Or, descending from the survey of a universe of worlds to consider the economy of a single world, even with greater force shall we feel the same truth. Such a world as this no wise man would have created. He would have filled up the ocean with plough-ground, and sloped the mountains gently for vineyards, and covered with rich verdure the sands of the wilderness. And the waters would have brought forth after their kind only beautiful things, and every creature moving in the forests would have been musical and fair; and the sky would have been without cloud on its rich blue, and the year without winter or storm in its long summer of loveliness. 2. Providence. And whether we regard the entire economy of providence as a stupendous whole, or each successive development in its separation, the same truth will be manifest. Man certainly would have ordered the whole thing differently. Instead of those mysterious periods of slowly ascending life, he would have rounded earth into beauty at first as a home for immortals, and breathed Divine life into man made in God's image. Place at the head of human affairs an omnipotent philanthropist, and how soon would every dark thing be swept from a groaning creation. How the captive would leap from his chain, and the conqueror lay off his mail, and the cries of violence cease, and the rod of the oppressor be broken! How these dark places of cruelty would be irradiated with heavenly light, and Christianity, borne as on angel-wings, circle the round world! II. APPLICATION. 1. Our first remark is addressed to this very class who reject the Bible because to their finitude it seems either unwise or incomprehensible. The poor erring creature of an hour, who cannot build a hovel that will not leak, nor weave a perfect garment to cover him, he—wonderful man that he is—would lift his thoughts into brotherhood with God's thoughts, and adjust the complicate sublimities of revelation by the square and the line of his insignificant faculties! Why, the sceptic should begin further back and earlier with his scepticism, as his arguments lie as strongly against creation and providence. 2. Within our own time a new philosophy hath invaded the Church of Christ, with its watchwords "spiritual insight," and "the moral reason," and "intuitional capacity," setting itself to overthrow the indispensable condition of all true piety—the entire, unquestioning, adoring submission alike of life, and conscience, and intellect unto God. And while the Church receives not this philosophy formally—for this were openly to deny the faith—yet, under its insidious and malign influence, there has come to pass a setting up within Zion of our own intellectual and moral judgments as critic and arbiter of the great doctrines of revelation. Doctrines that

are profound or mysterious, if not openly rejected, are at least modified to square with our philosophy. And the positive declarations of God are lowered to the comprehension of our natural reason. We are as yet learners in God's school-room, not advisers in His council-chamber! We shall understand things better by and by, when eternity flings its full light on the page of our scholarship! But until then humility is the apt temper of a learner. And faith, not comprehension, the great law of the scholarship! Till then ours must be the submission of an infantile mind to an infinite Intelligence—the trust of a short-sighted child in an all-seeing Father. 3. But the thought under consideration applies as well to the phenomena of Christianity as to its facts. Take, for example, its gradual increase and development. The characteristic of the age is impatience of anything but a demonstrative and headlong progress. Tell me where, either in creation or providence, God thus hurries to conclusions? So far from discouragements in this slow progress of Christianity, we have therein only fuller proof of its Divine origin, nobler prophecy of its ultimate consummation. 4. There is a still more consoling application of this truth to things unseen and eternal—immortality. The grand characteristic and charm of the eternal world is its utter unlikeness to the temporal and earthly. (*C. Wadsworth.*) *God's ways and man's ways:*—There is nothing, perhaps, in which God's thoughts and ways are more seen to be "higher" than man's than in the matter of salvation; and it is in renouncing his own ways, and yielding to God's, that the main difficulty of salvation on man's part lies. Because there is nothing more simple than the plan of salvation—substitution. I. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts IN THE MATTER OF PARDON. This is proclaimed freely, without any condition on man's part in the way of satisfaction to God's holy and broken law. Salvation is represented in Scripture as something which God Himself has achieved. God has "delivered man from going down into the pit; He has found a ransom;" and therefore, in every point of view, this salvation is perfect and complete. It is, further, proclaimed to sinners as a gift which they cannot earn or deserve, but which they are entreated to accept as a gift on account of what Christ has done (Rom. vi. 23). Men are called on to believe it instantly, to receive it and enjoy it at once, as the gift of God's love in Christ Jesus. Now, to this the world objects, because such a plan of salvation knocks down man's pride, and leaves him in the position of a rebellious sinner dependent wholly on God's grace and mercy. To escape, therefore, from such an ignominious admission, some go on to argue that by this view God's law is dishonoured, sin is treated as if of no consequence, and the pardoned sinner is left without any obligation to obey God. But is this true? II. God's "thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways," IN THE WAY IN WHICH PEACE AND JOY FOLLOW ON BELIEVING THE GOSPEL. This is proclaimed in Scripture as instant (Rom. v. 1). But the world objects to this, and calls it presumption; and if they hear of a notorious sinner being converted, and entering into peace, they immediately set him down as a hypocrite. The question is not whether they are hypocrites, but whether a man who believes the Gospel, and is full of joy and peace in consequence, is a hypocrite. Whatever the world says on the subject, Scripture does not so represent him. We must take care and not conclude that where there is no peace there is no faith. This would be as wrong as to conclude that where there is not perfect health there is no life. III. There is still another point in which "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways," namely, HIS LONGSUFFERING. In preaching, I have no limit to make in the Gospel. If you say, "This surely is abusing the goodness of God," I reply, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways." (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) *God's thoughts:*—The very act of thinking implies imperfection. But it is a way of picturing the Divine nature by a comparison with man. Man thinks, reasons, and so arrives at certain results. These he calls thoughts or conclusions. It is not so with God. He has no need to arrive at conclusions by any mental process. He knows everything. It is difficult to find any English word wherewith to express the idea intended. The word "feelings" might partly do so—method of action as the result of "feelings"—"dealings." It is really the whole of the Divine nature. "My nature is not as your nature, nor My ways of action as your ways of action." The grand idea is a consciousness of the vast difference which exists between ourselves and God, and to certain practical inferences to be devolved therefrom. These are—I. THAT WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE OF GOD BY OUR OWN FEELINGS. How can we for one moment put ourselves in the place of the great and mighty King of kings? 1. Consider our ignorance compared with His perfect knowledge—our weakness compared with His almighty power—our short life compared with His eternity of existence. All these things point out the folly of setting ourselves to judge of the Divine

acts or the Divine method of providence, by the methods which we would pursue. And yet people say, or think if they do not say, in so many words, that they could carry on the world far more wisely than God. 2. Consider our sin in comparison with God's holiness. Sin prevents all feeling, all right, all truth. It has changed all men's views with respect to propriety or justice. And yet there are men who would dispute the justice of the Almighty's dealings with men. II. THAT WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE OF OUR OWN POSITION BY OUR OWN THOUGHTS. The ways of every man are right in his own eyes. We think we are acting for the best when we are acting for the worst. We think we are serving God when we are bribing the devil. We think we are setting an example of all virtue to our neighbours, when all the while we are nought but hypocrites. We are not to judge of our position of holiness by our own thoughts. What a criteria of judgment are human thoughts! They go astray from the beginning, they are altogether depraved. How can we estimate our own advancement by them? Woe be to those who do, for they will only court destruction. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts. Some are nearer the kingdom of heaven than they suppose, while others are further off. III. THAT WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE OF ANY OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE FUTURE BY OUR OWN THOUGHTS. The world has a way of either perverting revelation, or inventing new theories from its own imagination. (*Homilist.*) *Disparity of thoughts, Divine and human:*—I. GOD AND MAN DIFFER IN THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING LIFE—the meaning of our present existence, as we live in this world day by day. Man's general conception is that he has been sent into this world endowed with certain powers of body and mind that he may get on, and rise commercially, socially, and in those things which are hemmed in by things seen and temporal. As men are thus employed God looks down upon them with the tender eye of a mother and the pitying heart of a father, and says to His erring children, "Why do ye spend your time and destroy your immortal powers in such a vain pursuit? You have mistaken the meaning of your present life, and the reason I sent you into the world. My thoughts concerning it are not your thoughts, and My ways are not your ways. Your life was given that you might grow in wisdom, experience, and Divine likeness in character, and the earth is a school in which you are to be trained, educated for highest worship and noblest service." II. GOD AND MAN DIFFER IN THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING DIFFICULTIES AND SORROWS. The human and natural way of looking at these things is to view them as unmitigated evils, and that either God knows and cares nothing about those who endure them, or that they are manifestations of His ill-will and judicial anger. These are not the thoughts of God. As seen in the light of heaven they are either the result of the violation of the law of love, of selfishness and sin, or are educative agencies to make the soul strong, tender, and true. III. GOD AND MAN DIFFER IN THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF ENEMIES. Hatred has been met by hatred; scorn has been answered by scorn; and for evil rendered evil has been repaid in full measure, pressed down and running over. Far otherwise has it been with God. Regarding treatment of enemies, God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and My ways are not your ways. Ye would render evil for evil, hate for hate, blow for blow. I love Mine enemies, I seek to bless the greatest sinner, I cause My sun to shine on the unjust, and unthankful, and am ready to take all prodigals into My forgiving embrace." This has been God's action from the first man till now. IV. GOD AND MAN DIFFER IN THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING DEATH. Men's thoughts on the matter are full of sadness, and they beget a melancholy most difficult to bear. But God understands life and He understands death, and if we are filled with His thoughts and walk in His ways, the supposed enemy that seems to be a fiend and the destroyer of our existence shall appear in the glorious position of being the condition of a higher, purer, fuller life, that shall never cease to be, and like the echoes of the soul "shall grow for ever and for ever." (*W. Adamson, D.D.*) *The mystery and the glory of redemption:*—The whole Bible is but an expansion of one utterance of the Eternal, "I am Jehovah." Hence the revelation must be incomplete, for a God who could fully reveal Himself to His creatures would be no God; and it must also be astonishing and amazing, for a professed record of any part of God's thoughts and ways that did not land in mystery and tend to wonder, would be self-condemned, and proved to be neither true nor Divine. I. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to THE NEED OF REDEMPTION. The lessons of Scripture, while leaving the entrance of evil in its awful mystery, assist our faith by showing that our misgivings in regard to God, which thence arise, are groundless, and also that, however strange, yet as a matter of fact, evil can be overruled for

good. II. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to THE PURPOSE OF REDEMPTION. Man, as we learn from Scripture—the only source whence we can expect to know it—is not the only being who has fallen; but man is the only being who is redeemed. There are those who profess not to believe in Scripture, but who arraign this supposed procedure as unfair and unequal; and there are those also who accept Scripture, and yet reject its apparently clear testimony as to the exclusion of fallen angels from mercy. Both classes of objectors go upon the same principle that God cannot justly punish with a final sentence of rejection those who have sinned against Him, no matter how aggravated their offences may be; but that in some way having given them being, He is bound to make that being ultimately good and happy. But this runs counter to the whole Bible doctrine of grace; for on this footing, redemption is a clear debt; and whether it be fallen angel or fallen man God is not entitled to withhold it. Men may stand in their views either upon justice or upon grace; but they are not entitled to stand upon both. III. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION. How utterly unlike to any means of man's devising are those which God has chosen for the recovery of His lost creatures to His favour and image! All the opposition to evangelical religion with which we are surrounded, and which incessantly repeats, "Give us a Christianity that is rational! Give us a Christianity that we can believe! Give us a Christianity that meets, as everything else is doing, the advancement of the age!"—what does it amount to but this, "Give us a Christianity without God! Give us a Christianity without that element of grandeur, of mystery, of overwhelming superiority to man's thoughts and ways, which compels awe and humbles pride!" We accept the demand, come from what quarter it may, as an involuntary homage to the superhuman glory of the faith we stand by. IV. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to THE PROGRESS OF REDEMPTION. Redemption has a history; and this of all others the most difficult to scan, not only as it lies in the Bible, but in uninspired records. It has been said, "Interpret the Bible as any other book;" but though there is a certain truth in this, if we take it roundly it ultimately means, "Interpret God as you interpret man." You cannot even interpret Church history as you interpret any other history. It is in a sense which belongs to no other history, the story of a battle not yet fought out, of a campaign not yet ended; and there are combatants at work beyond the range of human observation, and a supreme celestial leader, whose point of survey none can share. I shall illustrate this union of mystery and greatness in regard to three features in the progress of redemption. 1. The rate of its progress. 2. The instruments of its progress. 3. The hindrances to its progress. Man would have thought that hindrances would have speedily been removed, or that if they were suffered to remain or to return, they would have proved unmingled evils to the Church. But God, on the other hand, we can now so far see, by giving the victory slowly, trains the faith and courage of successive generations, and by permitting old enemies to return, or new ones to spring up, shows the unexhausted and inexhaustible energy of His Gospel, to face and put down every hostile power. V. It is only necessary to add a few words in regard to THE LIMITS OF REDEMPTION. Here also God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. And hence the real and painful difficulty, which has always been felt in regard to the Gospel, and perhaps never more openly expressed than in our own day. Why should not all men, as God wishes, "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"? Why should redemption, in the case of the human family, have any limits at all? Can we aspire to take in all God's view of what a tremendous evil, like sin, and especially the rejection of the Son of God, may demand? (*J. Cairns, D.D.*)

Sovereign thoughts:—I. THE THOUGHTS OF GOD ARE ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE; THE THOUGHTS OF MEN ARE TEMPORAL AND CHANGEABLE. Reflections on things older and less changeable than ourselves are the best guides to the unknown heights of the Father's wisdom. They lead us some distance, but only to show us the way. These mountains were long seated on their rocky seats ere the plan of the pyramids of Egypt was conceived in the heart of man. These rivers had flown majestically in their channels for thousands of years before man made his aqueducts to entice them from their course. The revolving sun poured its ceaseless floods of light on the universe myriads of ages before the scientist made the first telescope. Astronomy tells us that the worlds which occupy distant locations in space have swept silently through their trackless regions for periods of indefinite duration. Geology unfolds the rocky leaves of the earth's crust, and deciphers hieroglyphics which roll us backward beyond animal and vegetable life to primeval rocks whose age no historian can

compute. Thus we are furnished with materials to write a grand history of by-gone generations, stretching into the past beyond our comprehension. This history is the A B C of the eternal. The fact that the thoughts of God are eternal, fixes His immutable counsel and purpose. The redemption of fallen man is a thought without beginning, and is not subject to any variation. This is the rock on which we build our Christian faith. Through the varying scenes of life there runs the one purpose of God in Christ Jesus to save our souls and reconstruct human society. II. THE THOUGHTS OF GOD ARE PRIMARY CAUSES, WHILE OURS ARE MERE IMPRESSIONS. 1. The heavens and the earth are manifestations, not only of power and wisdom, but of mind. 2. No less evident is it that the revelation of Himself as the Saviour of man through human consciousness is the product of His thoughts. (1) God's thoughts in the Gospel are greater than man's thoughts. So great are some of them that they are above human comprehension (Rom. xi. 33). (2) God's thoughts are better than man's thoughts. The whole of the chapter is a declaration of sovereign mercy. The offender is called to repentance, and offered a free pardon. Human wisdom would ask, How can this be? How shall moral government stand without punitive justice. Can God be just if He justify the repentant sinner? There is but one answer: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Mercy is inexplicable except in its operations. III. GOD'S METHODS ARE INSCRUTABLE, LIKE UNTO HIS THOUGHTS; BUT MEN'S WAYS ARE CROOKED AND PERVERSE. The Scriptural meaning of the word "way" is the character with which actions are stamped. Actions reveal the thoughts and motives of the actor. They are a reflex of himself. The ways of God are His thoughts in operation. "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known." These words echo those of an older book, or, at least, they are the echo of the wisdom of the ancients—"By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?" "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." Fix your minds on the way of His goodness and mercy unto us. Think of the wonderful display of wisdom in the redemption of mankind. Jesus has appeared to remove our offences by the sacrifice of Himself. This great manifestation of eternal thought is the banquet at which the intelligences of heaven will sit, world without end. IV. THE THOUGHTS AND WAYS OF GOD ARE BEFORE US FOR CORRECTION AND IMITATION. V. THE THOUGHTS OF GOD ARE WITH US AS OUR INHERITANCE. He who has passed through the process of examining the casket to the possession of its contents, can say, "How precious also are Thy thoughts, O God! how great is the sum of them." (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The incomprehensibility of the mercy of God:*—"Lo, these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard of Him!" This is one of the most sententious sayings of Job, and it expresseth, in a very emphatic manner, the works of God. What this holy man said of the wonders of nature, we, with much more reason, say of the wonders of grace. Collect all that pagan philosophers have taught of the goodness of the Supreme Being. To the opinions of philosophers join the declarations of the prophets. Add the discoveries of the evangelists and apostles. To the whole join your own experience; your ideas to their ideas, your meditations to their meditations, and then believe that ye are only floating on the surface of the goodness of God, that His love hath dimensions, a "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," which the human mind can never attain: and, upon the brink of this ocean, say, "Lo, these are only parts of His ways, and how little a portion is heard of Him!" Three things are necessary to explain the text. I. THE MEANING MUST BE RESTRAINED. It is certain, that, in many respects, God's ways are our ways, and His thoughts our thoughts. I mean, that there are many cases in which we may assure ourselves that God thinks so and so, and will observe such or such a conduct. To contrast the supreme grandeur of the Creator with the insignificance of the creature; to persuade mankind that the great Supreme is too lofty to concern Himself with us, that our conduct is entirely indifferent to Him; that it signifies nothing to Him whether we be just or unjust, humane or cruel, happy or miserable: to say in these senses, that "God's ways are not our ways," that "His thoughts are not our thoughts," these are the arms that infidelity hath sometimes employed with success, and against the attacks of which we would guard you. For these reasons, the meaning of the text must be restrained, or it will totally subvert religion and morality. The exercise of my reasoning powers produceth in me some incontestable notions of God, and, from these notions immediately follow some sure

consequences, which become the immovable basis of my faith in His Word, of my submission to His will, and of my confidence in His promises. These notions, and these consequences compose the body of natural religion. Let it be granted that God is, in many respects, quite incomprehensible, that we can obtain only a small degree of knowledge of this infinite Object, yet it will not follow that the notions which reason gives us of Him are less just, or, that the consequences, which immediately follow these notions, are less sure. If reason affords us some adequate notions of God, if some necessary consequences follow these notions, for a much stronger reason we may derive some adequate notions of God, and some sure consequences, from revelation. II. THE OBJECT MUST BE DETERMINED. The prophet's expressions would have been true, had they been applied to all the attributes of God; however, they are applied here only to one of them, that is, to His goodness. Wherein do the thoughts of God differ from ours? In God there are treasures of mercy, the depth of which no finite mind can fathom. In Him goodness is as inconceivable as all His other attributes. In God, a sinner, who seems to have carried his sin to its utmost extravagance, and to have exhausted all the treasures of Divine grace, shall still find, if he "return unto the Lord," and cast himself at the foot of Him who "abundantly pardoneth," a goodness, a compassion, a love that he could not have imagined to find. III. THE PROOFS MUST BE PRODUCED. (1) The means by which God conciliated His justice with His love. (2) His patience with those who abuse this means. (3) His intimate union with those who fall in with the design of His patience. Let us address the text to the gloomy mind of a melancholy person, who, having failed in the courage necessary to resist temptations, fails again in that which is necessary to bear the thought of having fallen into them. What madness possesseth thy melancholy mind? The Holy Spirit assures thee that "though thy sins be as scarlet" He will make them "white as snow;" that "though they be red like crimson" He will make them "as wool;" and dost thou think that thy sins are too aggravated to be pardoned in this manner? The Holy Spirit gives thee a long list of the most execrable names in nature; a list of idolaters, murderers, extortioners, adulterers, persecutors, highway robbers, and blasphemers, who obtained mercy when they sought it: and art thou obstinately bent on excluding thyself from the number of those sinners to whom mercy is promised; and because thou dost not believe it attainable, dost thou obstinately refuse to ask for it? The Holy Spirit hath lifted up a Cross, and on that Cross a Redeemer, who is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him;" and who Himself saith to all sinners, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And dost thou flee from this Cross, and rather choose to sink under the weight of thy sins than to disburden them on a Redeemer who is willing to bear them? But, passing all these, let us return to the text. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," etc. This is sufficient to refute the whole system of a despairing mind. (*J. Saurin.*) *God's ways and man's:*—These words are grand poetry and noble theology, but they are meant practically and in fiery earnestness. The "for" at the beginning of each clause points us back to the previous statement, and both of the verses of our text are in different ways its foundation. So we have here two things to consider in reference to the relation between the Divine purposes and acts and man's purposes and acts. I. THE ANTAGONISM, AND THE INDICTMENT AND EXHORTATION THAT ARE BASED UPON THAT. 1. Notice the remarkable order and alternation of pronouns in the first verse. "*My* thoughts are not *your* thoughts," saith the Lord. The things that God thinks and purposes are not the things that man thinks and purposes, and therefore, because the thoughts are different, the outcomes of them in deeds are divergent. God's "ways" are His acts, the manner and course of His working considered as a path on which He moves, and on which, in some sense, we can also journey. Our "ways"—our manner of life—are not parallel with His, as they should be. But that opposition is expressed with a remarkable variation. Observe the change of pronouns in the two clauses. First, "*My* thoughts are not your thoughts"—you have not taken My truth into your minds, nor My purposes into your wills; you do not think God's thoughts. Therefore—"*your* ways (instead of 'My,' as we should have expected, to keep the regularity of the parallelism) are not My ways"—I repudiate and abjure your conduct and condemn it utterly. Now, of course, in this charge of man's unlikeness to God there is no contradiction of, nor reference to, man's natural constitution, in which there are, at one and the same time, the likeness of the child with the parent and the unlikeness between the creature and the Creator. If our thoughts were not like God's thoughts we should

know nothing about Him. If our thoughts were not like God's thoughts we should have no standard for life or thinking. Righteousness and beauty and truth and goodness are the same things in heaven and earth, and alike in God and man. We are made after His image, poor creatures though we be. But that very necessary and natural likeness between God and man makes more solemnly sinful the voluntary unlikeness which we have brought upon ourselves. Mark how wonderfully, in the simple language of my text, deep truths about this sin of ours is conveyed. Notice its growth and order. You begin with a heart and mind that does not take in God's thoughts, truths, purposes, desires, and the alienated will and the darkened understanding and the conscience which has closed itself against His imperative voice all issue afterwards in conduct which He cannot accept as in any way corresponding with His. First, the thought unreceptive of God's thought, and then the ways contrary to God's ways. 2. Notice the profound truth here in regard to the essential and deepest evil of all our evil. "Your thoughts;" "your ways." Self-dependence and self-confidence are the master-devils of humanity. And the root of all sin lies in these two strong, simple words, "Your thoughts not Mine; your ways not Mine." 3. Notice, too, how there are suggested the misery and retribution of this unlikeness. "If you will not make My thoughts your thoughts, I shall not take your ways as My ways. I will leave you to them. You will be filled with the fruit of your own devices." The question rises in many a heart, "How am I to forsake these paths on which my feet have so long walked? And if I do, what about all the years behind me, full of wild wonderings and thoughts, in all of which God was not?" The second verse of our text meets that despairing question. II. THE ANALOGY BUT SUPERIORITY, AND THE EXHORTATION AND HOPE THAT ARE BUILT UPON THAT. This clause begins with God's ways, from which alone men can reach the knowledge of His thoughts. The first follows the order of God's knowledge of man; the second, that of man's knowledge of God. 1. God's way of dealing with sin is lifted up above all human example. There is such a thing as pardoning mercy amongst men. It is a faint analogy of, as it is an offshoot from the Divine pardon, but all the forgivingness of the most placable and long-suffering and gladly pardoning of men is but as earth to heaven compared with the greatness of His. 2. Again, God's way of dealing with sin surpasses all our thought. All religion has been pressed with this problem, how to harmonize the perfect rectitude of the Divine nature and the solemn claims of law with forgiveness. We have Jesus Christ. The mystery of forgiveness is solved, in so far as it is capable of solution, in Him and in Him alone. 3. We are taught here that God's way of dealing with sin is the very highest point of His self-revelation. If we want to see up into the highest heavens of God's character, we must go down into the depths of the consciousness of our own sin, and learn first how unlike our ways and thoughts are to God, ere we can understand how high above us, and yet beneficently arching over us, are His ways and thoughts to us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *God's thoughts and ways far above ours:*—I. THERE IS REBUKE ADMINISTERED. The Lord says, "Forsake your way, for it is not My way; leave your thoughts, for they are not My thoughts." The rebuke is enveloped in love, and made into a sugar-coated pill; the sweet promise of abundant pardon conceals the reproof. Let us take the rebuke, and notice—1. The fault of man's thoughts. "My thoughts are not your thoughts." (1) As between each other, God's thoughts are not man's, though they ought to be. God's thoughts are love, pity, tenderness; ours are forgetfulness, ingratitude, and hard-heartedness. (2) Your thoughts as to your conduct are not God's thoughts. He considers that the creatures He has made should obey Him, but you judge that it matters not what a man does towards his Maker so long as he is just towards his fellow-men. (3) God's thoughts, again, as to the life which a man needs in order to salvation are very different from man's thoughts. In this chapter He says, "Hear, and your soul shall live." He reckons, then, that man is dead till he has heard the word of God in his soul. Man reckons that he is alive enough. (4) God's thoughts are not our thoughts, again, in reference to the truth. Man thinks himself so wise and good that he does not like God's thoughts concerning himself, his fall, his guilt, and his danger. (5) In the matter of salvation God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, for God thinketh that man has so sinned that he must be condemned except a substitute be found. Man thinks not so. God sets before him pardon freely presented through the precious blood: man thinks to buy it by his devotions, or to win it by his merits. 2. The text advances to say that man's ways are not like God's. Our ways are the outward actions which spring out of our thoughts. God's ways are ways of holiness and purity. God hath never done

anything unjust to His creatures or unrighteous to Himself. But our ways are not so; they are full of error, marred with evil, polluted with impurity. By nature we love that which we ought to hate. Two cannot walk together in heaven except they be of one mind; so that our ways and God's ways must be made to be alike in character. Now, it is not possible for us to conceive of God's making His thoughts to be like our thoughts. What then? We must rise to Him. 3. I ask you to consider the difficulty of this. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways." How are we to be lifted up from earth to heaven? The word that answers the question is that matchless syllable, "grace." God in Christ Jesus, by His almighty grace, must raise us up together with Christ. II. WE HAVE REPENTANCE ENCOURAGED. "Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts." It is clear that there is a connecting link between the abundance of pardon and the lofty character of God, and that men are encouraged to forsake their ways and thoughts by the hope of pardon derived from the greatness of the Divine thoughts and ways. 1. Do not stand back because you cannot understand God. It is not needful that you should comprehend His ways and thoughts. 2. Neither start back because you cannot find a parallel to the grace which God declares that He will display towards you. 3. According to our text, whatever your ways towards God shall be in the future, He will exceed them. And as to your thoughts—can you think of how He will receive you? III. EXPECTATION EXCITED. This time the link is forward instead of backward. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither." 1. You are to expect that the Lord's word will be unfailing to you. 2. Next that you are returning to a God whose ways are so much above your ways, and His thoughts so much above your thoughts, that your heart shall be filled with joy—"ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." God will not merely break off your chains and say in cold accents, "You are free;" but He will release you amid the music of the spheres. 3. Next to this, all your surroundings shall minister to your gladness. "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing," etc. The mountain which you feared shall break forth into song, and the forest at which you trembled shall become an orchestra in which every tree shall clap its hands for joy. 4. And then, there shall happen to you wonderful transformations. Evil habits shall be withered and holy principles nourished. 5. This mercy is to endure for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Man's thoughts and God's thoughts:*—I. Compare your thoughts of THE POSSIBILITY OF PARDON with God's thoughts about it. You naturally form your ideas of God's ways from what you conceive would be yours if you were in His position. 1. I take you on that ground, and we will suppose that some wicked person has very grossly injured you and that the question of your forgiving him is now mooted. We will suppose you to be of a generous, frank, forgiving disposition, and in a calm and judicious state of mind. You are ready to act most leniently, but still the case in hand is no trifle and requires consideration. After well pondering the matter, you feel bound to say, "I could forgive this person, but his offence is of a peculiarly grievous kind. With the most sincere desire to pass over it, I feel that I must not, but must let the law take its course." There have been many occasions when persons aggrieved have thus spoken, and when no reasonable person could have blamed them. Such, O awakened sinner, is your case as before the Lord, and if He should think of you as one man would think of another, you must own Him to be just. You have offended God in the very tenderest point; you have denied His right to you, though you are His creature. Though you have been a pensioner upon His bounty, you have constantly insisted upon it that you were your own master, and had a right to do just as you pleased. You have thus invaded the crown rights of the King of kings, and committed treason against His sovereignty: worst of all, you have committed sin against His only begotten and most dear son, the Lord Jesus. If it were your case, you could not forgive; but be astonished as you hear that your thoughts are not God's thoughts, and His ways of forgiveness are as high above your ways as the heavens are above the earth. 2. It is supposable that when you are weighing the case of an offender you decide upon it thus: "I could forgive him, bad as the sin is, if I thought he had fallen into it from inadvertence or carelessness, or if I supposed that he was moved by some great hope of gain for himself, but the offence was intentional, malicious, and wanton, and therefore I cannot remit it." Naturally you transfer these thoughts of yours to the Lord of heaven, and you say, "He will never pardon me, for I have trespassed wilfully. I have sinned without excuse." Such language as this befits a

penitent's tongue; men cannot forgive their fellows when they perceive wanton malice in their crimes, but God can forgive you. 3. You will in some cases also be obliged to say, "I could very readily have overlooked this fault, but it has been repeated." Such to the full, is your case, O troubled sinner, with regard to God. Though you hardly dare to think of forgiveness, God can not only think of it, but bestow it. 4. I can conceive a person greatly injured saying, "I would overlook all these injuries which have been hurled against me, but I cannot see any reason why I should have been the particular object of this man's spite; it has been quite undeserved on my part, and unprovoked." That would be a very excellent reason in a court of justice for insisting on the punishment of an offender. Listen to the voice of the good God whom you have injured (chap. i. 2, 3). What is the sequel to this very just but sad complaint? (i. 18). 5. "Yes," says an offended person, "I might overlook the fault if I thought the man were wholly humbled now; but you see he asks me to pardon, but he has not a sufficient sense of his guilt." Troubled sinner, this is very much your case. You are somewhat broken down, but you must confess that your heart is hard still, compared with what it ought to be. But God says, "I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give them a heart of flesh." 6. "Still," exclaims the aggrieved party, "I think the man ought to make me some compensation." This principle is very properly recognized in courts of justice. Now, poor sinner, you feel that you cannot bring any compensation. But our loving God does not ask you for any compensation; He says, "Only return unto Me." Sin is freely forgiven for Jesus' sake. 7. Naturally, many a just-minded person would say, "If I were most gracious, yet I could not find it in my heart freely to forgive when I see the consequences always before my eyes." Suppose that somebody had wantonly injured your child; suppose he had broken one of your child's limbs, for instance; I think I hear you say, "I could forgive him, but look at my poor limping child." But sinner! God sees before Him daily tokens of what you have done! You can never unwrite the past, nor restore the lost one. All that accursed past of sin must live on. If you light the fire, it will burn on to the lowest hell. God may forgive your incendiarism, but the fire itself still continues. With all the consequences of your sin before Him, He forgives you freely if you rest on Jesus. 8. Furthermore, I can conceive a case in which the offended party can fairly say, "I do feel from my heart fully prepared to forget this offence against me, but it was public, and therefore highly obnoxious and injurious." Trembling sinner, you also may well think, "Surely God will never forgive me, for against Him only have I sinned, and done this evil in His sight. I sinned in the face of the sun. I sinned unblushingly, and gloried in my shame." Rejoice, poor mourner, that this is no reason why the Lord should not forgive you, for as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are His thoughts above your thoughts. 9. I can imagine it possible that an offended one might add, by way of clenching all his arguments against pardon, "My forgiveness he has already despised. I have put myself to great expense in order to subdue his hatred, and yet he has stood out against me. How can reason and justice expect me to do any more?" I might, perhaps, answer, No; neither of them can well expect more of you; but what we cannot expect of you, the guilty sinner may yet expect of God. II. Contrast your thoughts about THE PLAN OF PARDON with God's thoughts. If you have advanced far enough to believe that God can pardon, and have to this extent laid hold upon God's thoughts, it is well; but still another of your own thoughts drags you down, for you have a wrong idea of the way of pardon. 1. I will suppose that there are persons who ignorantly say, "If it be true that the Lord will pardon sin, let Him do it outright; let Him just take the pen and mark through all my transgressions, and have done with them. He has but to say, 'I forgive thee,' and there is an end of it." But God's thoughts are not your thoughts in this case. You have evidently become so impure in heart as to look upon sin as a trifle; but the Judge of all the earth is of another mind. The great Rules cannot suffer sin to go unpunished. 2. Others have a notion that God may, perhaps, forgive them by putting them through a course of affliction. It is still a superstitious notion lingering in England, that poor persons are the special objects of Divine favour, and that hard work and poverty, and especially a long lingering sickness, are a means of putting away sin; for persons so afflicted have had so much misery in this life that they do not deserve to suffer more. But your thoughts on this matter are not God's thoughts. You may be as poor as Lazarus, but never lie in Abraham's bosom; you may endure as many sufferings here as fell to the lot of Job, and yet may go from Job's dunghill to hell. Cast out any idea that these sufferings or privations of yours can make atonement for sin. 3. A more current idea still is, that God will

put away the past and give men a new start, and that if they go on well for the future, then in their dying hour God will speak pardon. But there is nothing of that kind in the Word of God. 4. There is a very current supposition, however, that God pardons sin in this way: that He says, "Well, now, I forgive you the past. My law was a little too severe for you, but I will try you again under a more lenient rule. Do as well as you can, and I will save you." But God does nothing of the kind! The forgiveness which is given to a sinner reaches to the sins which are yet to be committed as well as to the sins which he has already done. Christ stood for you, and therefore God is severely just while He is bountifully merciful to you. In the next place, when God forgives you He does it unconditionally. III. THE PRESENT POSSESSION OF THIS PARDON. 1. There is an idea in the mind of many that the plan of just trusting in Christ, and being pardoned on the spot, is too simple to be safe. It is a well-known fact that the simplest remedies are the most potent and safe; and, certainly, the simplest rules in mechanics are just those upon which the greatest engineers construct their most wonderful erections. Do not despise the Gospel because it is simple. 2. I think I hear you say, "It is too good to be true." But it is just like our God. 3. I think I hear your heart say, "It seems to me to be a plan too swift to be sure." This is no human nostrum, this is a Divine prescription. "Believe and live!" Have done with thyself, and begin with Christ. (*Ibid.*) Neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.—*The great contrast:*—Nature, Providence and Grace abound in eloquent illustrations of the text. I. OBSERVE NATURE. 1. God's works are characteristic. They manifest His character. Man's do not. We cannot tell infallibly what a fellow-creature is by remarking what he does. A garment is made for you. Are you able, as you look at it, to discover what the maker is? A carpenter constructs a box, table or chair; but nothing in its manufacture informs the spectator of the workman's holiness or sinfulness. It is even so with books. The productions of the pen sometimes oppose the deeds of the life. But God's works show us Himself. The purity and power, the mercy and majesty of Jehovah, are all displayed in creation. 2. God's works will bear the most minute examination. In yonder gallery of art is a painting. Stand from it at a certain distance and you are struck with its beauty. Look at it closely and it becomes a mere confusion of colours. But ascend a hill. Gaze at the landscape. Here it is a Divine picture. The fields are emerald with grass, golden and white with prolific wild-flowers. Beheld afar off, the scene is glorious. Come down the hill, however. Go into the meadow. Pluck one of the flowers, and gaze at it minutely; gather a blade of grass, and subject it to a most scrutinizing examination. It will bear it. It is as beautiful as ever. A piece of lace which looks delicate and fine to the naked eye becomes coarse and clumsy under a microscope. Not so the wing of a fly or a moth. Magnify the finest needle ever made, and it immediately looks rude and rough; but magnify the sting of a bee a million of times, and its surface is still smooth and unvarying. 3. God's works are inexhaustible in attractiveness. We never tire of nature. Human achievements are limited in the interest which they yield. II. STUDY PROVIDENCE. How opposed to men's expectations have been many of God's dealings. Placed in His position they would have done the very opposite of what He was pleased to accomplish. *E. g.* Israel when brought out of Egypt; Joshua and Jericho; Gideon and the Midianites; Naaman and his leprosy. "Man proposes, God disposes." We form our plans; He frequently leaves them where they are, and never allows them to crystallize into action. Brains are racked and hearts made anxious touching divers schemes and sundry intentions, when, lo! He who has the disposing of the lot quietly ignores them, and leads us into an altogether different path from that which we expected. I once visited the house of a friend. While waiting for admission my attention was arrested by a trivial but suggestive object. Beside the door an evergreen had been planted. It was drooping and dying. Close to it, however, was a wild flower. Dropped by a passing bird, or cast there on the wings of the wind, some seed had taken root. It flourished and grew strong. Nor is it otherwise with human events. Schemes which we set, water, and watch, disappoint us and fail, while God gives to something very different vigour and life. III. CONSIDER GRACE. In His spiritual dealings with us, "Neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." 1. God loves all. We do not. Large-hearted philanthropists, whose affection takes in the whole race, are exceptional. 2. God makes allowance for our difficulties. Physical infirmities commonly awaken pity. We take them into account when we judge. Would that we carried out the same rule a little further! Not seldom when we judge of our fellows morally and spiritually, we lose sight of the difficulties which

they have to encounter. If we remembered their peculiar trials and temptations, we should speak a little less harshly of them. God makes full and large allowance for our difficulties. He sees and appreciates the obstacles with which we grapple. "He remembereth that we are dust." 3. God helps us through our difficulties. Adversity is a severe ordeal. Tried thereby, many friendships are found wanting. Fair weather and smooth sailing on life's sea will win fellow-voyagers, but clouds and breakers few will share with us. How different is it with God; "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"—not even in trial. Nay, He is nearer to us then than ever. He not only makes allowance for our difficulties, but helps us through them. Two children were once overheard talking about the Good Shepherd. "What does He do?" said one. "He feeds the sheep, and drives away the wild beasts," was the reply. "But," rejoined the first, "He does more for the sheep; He carries them up hill." 4. God is very forgiving. Man is not: he is slow to pardon (ver. 7). (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *God's longsuffering surpasses man's:*—An evangelist was conducting special services in a Yorkshire village and urged his Gospel-hardened audience to immediate decision. As he pictured the longsuffering of God his face beamed with holy excitement. Then, falling on his knees, he cried, "Lord, Lord, how stubborn they are! If I had been Thee, I'd a had 'em all in hell long since."

Ver. 9. **For as the heavens are higher than the earth.**—*The near and heavenly horizons:*—I. THE HEAVENS ARE SO FAR ABOVE THE EARTH, AND THEREFORE SO PURE. By nature, the trend of our thinkings and activities is downward, earthly, sensual, devilish. Hence the awful disparity between the ways and thoughts of God and ours. It is impossible, therefore, for the natural man to understand God, or, to please God. It is impossible, also, for the natural man to live with God for ever, unless the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. II. SO FAR, AND THEREFORE SO ABUNDANT. This is the thought which the apostle expands in one of the most glowing passages on the page of revelation (Rom. v. 12–21). His point is, that whatever was done by sin, and through sin, must be paralleled and outdone by the grace of God. There is no parallel between our forgiveness and God's. When God forgives, He ceases to remember; He blots out iniquities as a cloud, and sins as a thick cloud; He does not treat us simply as pardoned criminals, but takes us to His heart as beloved sons, He transforms the sad consequences of our sins into blessings, instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle-tree. This surely is as much above man's notions of forgiveness as the heavens are high above the earth. III. SO FAR, AND THEREFORE SO BENEFICENT. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The transcendent elevation of God:*—It is a wonderful and beautiful turn which the prophet here gives to the thought of the transcendent elevation of God. The heavens are the very type of the unattainable; and to say that they are "higher than the earth" seems, at first sight, to be but to say, "No man hath ascended into the heavens," and you sinful men must grovel here down upon your plain, whilst they are far above, out of your reach. But the heavens bend. They are an arch, and not a straight line. They touch the horizon; and there come from them the sweet influences of sunshine and of rain, of dew and of blessing, which bring fertility. So they are not only far and unattainable, but friendly and beneficent, and communicative of good. Like them in true analogy, but yet infinite superiority to the best and noblest in man, is the boundless mercy of our pardoning God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 10–13. **For as the rain cometh down.**—*Rain, snow, symbolic of the Word of God:*—The fitness of the symbolism is apparent even to the most casual observer. 1. Snow and rain are characterized by gentleness which merges into force. One drop of rain falls upon my hand, and I crush it, and it is not; but when the drop is multiplied, and the great storm sweeps along the valley, it is almost resistless in its onrush. One feathery flake of snow falls through the atmosphere; I touch it, and it passes and is lost, its crystal beauty gone for ever at the rudeness of my human hand; but let that flake be multiplied and the falling snow will take hold of the thundering locomotive, clog its wheels, check its progress, bury it beneath its soft and noiseless whiteness. 2. Rain and snow are characterized by helplessness which grows into beneficence. We ask: What can this drop of rain do for man? What can this flake of snow do for humanity? And yet we know that when we pass from the individual drop to the great rain, that in falling makes the earth laugh back in harvest, and crowns the labour of the hands of men. There is no more exquisite word in all Scripture about Nature than that simple and sublime

passage, "He giveth His snow like wool." Like a warm mantle, it wraps the earth in winter-time, and keeps it, itself of the nature of cold, from the penetration of intenser cold. And so we find that rain and snow, helpless as they seem, are the very messengers of beneficence to men. 3. Rain and snow come to us characterized by unfruitfulness, yet generating fruitfulness, wherever they fall. (*G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*) *The Word of God*:—Let us take this symbolism of the prophet and consider it exactly as he has stated it—I. As to the similarities suggested. Let me first tabulate the phrase that we are to consider in this verse: "Cometh from heaven, returneth not thither; watereth the earth, making it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." 1. Man has nothing to do with the coming of the rain and the snow. In the midst of that wonderful questioning of Job by God occur these two inquiries: "Hast thou entered into the treasuries of the snow?" which, being translated, from poetry into prose, means, "Do you understand the snow?" Do you know from whence it comes? Can you analyze the mystery of its crystallization and deposit? Then, "Hath the rain a father?" Are you able to generate it, to produce it? The Word of God is a message from God to man which no man was able to find out for himself. It is never a philosophy formulated by human wisdom; it is always a revelation made. The supreme quality of the Word of God is that however men may occupy their time in discussing the methods by which we have come into possession of these documents, there is stamped upon every page of it the sign manual of Jehovah, great unveilings of His nature, great revelations of the deepest secrets of human life, great illumination of the problems that confront men by Divine revelation. It is the gift of God and not the contrivance of man. 2. But it "returneth not thither." The snow and the rain pour themselves out on the face of the earth, they melt and pass, and within a very few hours of the great rainfall which has sweetened everything in its coming the roads are dusty again, and we say, "How soon the rain has passed." So after the snow has once come under the influence of the sun it is gone. Judged by first appearances, it seems as though this gift of heaven had been poured upon earth to be spoiled, contaminated, wasted. So the Word of God. The Word of God has been given to men in figure and symbol, in prophecy and song, and at last in the Person of Jesus, and since He came, in exposition and explanation, for centuries; and, how perpetually it seems to us, as we watch the openings of the decades, and even of the centuries, as though this great outpouring of Divine revelation was lost, falling upon man but to be spoiled. 3. But it "watereth the earth." Take this dust as it lies upon the highway and over the furrowed field, and within the dust is the making of everything that is beautiful and fruitful. But the dust does not laugh in flowers; it is capable and incapable. Lying within it are all the forces of life. All the mysterious magnificence of your personality on the physical side lies within the dust at your feet, and all flowers that bloom lie there in potentiality. As the rain and snow water the earth, which is at once characterized by capacity and yet unable to fulfil the possibilities that lie sleeping within its own being, it makes all Nature laugh with new beauty. So also the Word of God comes to men in whose nature are the potentialities but not the realizations. The Word of God falls upon the centuries, upon society, upon individuals, and we thought it touched them but to be spoiled and soiled and pass, but we watched and we found that by its falling the soil became productive. There is in every human being the capacity for Deity. There are in every human life the potentialities of the highest and the noblest and the best. 4. The prophet now adds a further truth concerning these elements in the statement, "making it bring forth." After the rain and the snow the dull russet ground becomes beautiful with emerald and opal and ruby and diamond, and you know that when God's rain and snow touch the dust it makes the dust bring forth. So with the Word of God. The Word of God makes the dormant forces in man move to fulfilment. All men that have ever realized the possibilities of their own life have done so in response to some part of the Word of God, to the Word spoken, to the Word written, to the Word lived. 5. Yet another word that I have taken separately, because I think it really is separate. It is a stronger word than the former—"maketh it bring forth, and bud." I feel inclined to use here the literal Hebrew word, "and sprout." That is to say, the rain and the snow not merely touch the dust into generation, but come again in the grass, the flowers, the fruitage. And the Word of God has come from Him to touch the failure of human life, and it has been returning to Him laughing with the harvest of ransomed souls. The Word was incarnate in the Christ supremely, and in a less and different degree, but nevertheless as truly, God's Word has been re-incarnate in human lives in all the passing

centuries. 6. Yet that is not all. "That it may give seed to the sower." What is this harvest for? You say for the sustenance of human life. That is not the first thing. Bread to the eater is a secondary thing. Bread to the eater is provision for the toiler that he may continue his sowing and reap his harvests; but the first thing is that, in the new form in which the rain and snow return to God, there is always found the potentiality of propagation waiting for new showers and new transmutations and new harvests. So with the Word of God. The Word of God taking hold of human life, changing it, becoming incarnate in it, communicates propagative power; it makes a centre from which the seed may be scattered still further afield, and from one life re-made and sanctified by the Word of God there must go forth the seed that will affect yet other fields, and stretch out into great lines of blessed harvest. 7. "And bread to the eater." The man that ploughed and sowed and reaped feeds. The Word of God is also the bread of life to the toiler. II. As to the great principles revealed. The symbolism of this great prophetic Word teaches—1. That the Word of God is purposeful. The Word of God is not given to be possessed; it is given that it may possess. 2. That the Word of God is powerful. It shall not return to Him void. And why not? Because it never comes void from Him. Every word of God thrills with fruitfulness. If we but know how to receive it and how to respond, then it shall return to Him not void, but fruitful, in lives changed, re-moulded, re-fashioned, sanctified. 3. That the Word of God is prosperous. The word "accomplish" means it does something, it makes something, it realizes something; and the Hebrew word "prosper" literally means it "pushes forward." It is a great dynamic force. III. As to the responsibilities entailed. Rain and snow might fall upon the earth a long time and there be no harvest unless the earth is prepared. The rain and snow may fall in all their prodigal munificence and magnificence upon the earth, and there will be no harvest unless the seed is sown. And rain and snow may fall and make the earth laugh with harvest, if the earth be ready and the seed be sown, and yet men get no benefit unless the bread be eaten. Here, then, are three things at least that I would say: The earth must be prepared; "take heed how ye hear." The seed must be sown; "preach the Word." The bread must be eaten; "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." *The laws of grace as effectual as the laws of nature:*—I. The laws of nature are effectual. "For as the rain," etc. 1. Rain and snow are heaven-sent agents. 2. They effectually answer their purpose. 3. Their beneficent results. (1) Earthly beauty. "Maketh it bring forth and bud." (2) Husbandman supplied. "Giveth seed to the sower." (3) The citizen fed. "Bread to the eater." (4) Processes always repeated. II. The laws of Christianity are as effectual as the laws of nature. "So shall My Word be," etc. 1. The Divine origin of Christianity. "My Word." "Out of My mouth." 2. Christianity will not be defeated. "Shall not return unto Me void." 3. Christianity will ultimately accomplish God's will and pleasure. "Shall accomplish that which I please." 4. Christianity shall produce its Divinely intended results. "Shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." 5. As in nature, the process slow but certain. (*W. Unsworth.*) *Divine grace and human responsibility:*—1. Repeatedly has one come across good people making out, to their own satisfaction and comfort, that the non-return of God's Word to Him void just means that, when it does not soften and save it hardens, convicts, and condemns a man. And they think that dire result is the accomplishment of God's pleasure—is prosperity in the thing whereto He has sent His Word. It is true, of course, that where God's Word does not save, it condemns. But this is not the truth of these two verses. There is no reference in them to God's sovereignty as bent upon getting something or other out of the work of His Word; or to alternative purposes of His in sending it; or to some unknown, mysterious will of His that is served by the apparent or actual failure of His revealed will; or, indeed, to any judicial, punitive purpose or after-thought of His that comes into operation when His first and gracious purpose proves abortive. The verses contain no warning to impenitent sinners, but an encouragement to doubting believers in front of promises, like those in this chapter, which seem almost too good to be true. They do not set forth God's sovereign purpose in sending His Word as other than a sovereignly gracious purpose, and always gracious. They give a definite assurance, enforced and illustrated by "the rain and the snow from heaven," of God's kindness, of His power to make good His gracious Word, of His faithfulness to His beneficent promises. The similitude of the fertilizing, fruit-producing snow and rain, and the statement of vers. 12, 13, forbid other than a gracious purpose in God's sending His Word. When, therefore, it is asserted that His Word shall not return to Him void, all that is meant is that this gracious

purpose shall be effected, by His Word, before it goes back to Him. It does not fail. There is no lack of life, virtue, or grace in it. As regards its saving purpose, it never does return to Him void. 2. But how? Now, here we come to the true causes of the failure of God's Word to produce its legitimate and Divinely intended results, where it happens to fail. Just as the rain and the snow may, in some cases and under some conditions, very exceptional and mostly incidental, become a curse and not a blessing, so may God's Word fail to save men and only harden and condemn them. Men may be condemned in spite of Christ's coming to save the world. Men may bring upon themselves the wrath to which God did not appoint them. If so, it is in every case because God's purpose was resisted or thwarted; or the conditions of its fulfilment dependent on men were not complied with. The failure is not owing to God's pleasure that it should occur. It is an indirect consequence of His purpose, for which men alone are responsible. For, in the case of the rain and snow, God's purpose is realized only as men comply with the fitting and necessary conditions of using these aright. The rain and snow from heaven must be met by suitable conditions on earth by man's contribution of active preparation, careful husbandry, and seasonable watchfulness and diligence. Rain will not make sea-sand fertile. Rain will not make seed grow even in rich soil where no seed is sown, or where the seed, if sown, may be choked by weeds. There will be no seed to the sower who sows none; no bread to the eater who eats none. And so one can see that where God's Word fails to effect His purpose of grace, it is simply and solely from causes for which man is responsible. It does not work mechanically, by lifeless necessity, regardless of man's freedom and man's contribution to its success. God's Word fails, wherever it does fail, just because men do not comply with the simple, ordinary, commonplace, but essential conditions of spiritual husbandry. (*A. Warrack, M.A.*) *The efficacy of the Divine Word*:—The thoughts of God have been shown to be high above men's thoughts. Now He indicates that His words, whatever may appear to the contrary, are efficacious with a like Divine efficacy. 1. It is to be received as an encouragement. It is not given as an explanation or justification for the want of results. It is meant to give new heart to the messenger who fancies his words are falling fruitless and all his efforts proving vain before the inert, immovable mass of sin and evil in the world. Most who have essayed to be messengers of God have been conscious of the sense of failure at times, and this thought would be fitted to buoy them up. 2. It declares the fact that God's Word is never altogether a failure. It may seem to our eyes to be producing no result. It works secretly but certainly. The law of its working is the law of working with all seeds, at first slow and secret and unseen. Who does not believe that, although unseen, the seed is still duly germinating? Even the words of Christ did not prove uniformly successful with His hearers, but in the end how like the seed, has been their great and ever-increasing influence! 3. It gives the correct idea of preaching. Preaching should be the uttering of a word of God. It rebukes the notion that preaching in the sense of speaking our words about God is useful or effectual. This is what the scribes and Pharisees did. This is what happens always in the age of cold dogmatism, when men do not forthtell what they have felt of God in their own souls, but substitute explanations, traditions, and views about the truth that make it powerless. 4. It tells us of the never-failing benefit of public worship. Men say that such and such preachers are not worth hearing. But this reminds us that in every service there is the Word of God declared. Even if prayers be slovenly, praises be harsh, and sermons be dull, and the occupant of pulpit unworthy, yet we have a sure word of prophecy to rest upon, "It shall not return to Me void." (*J. Robertson.*) *The law of growth*:—I. THE UNIFORM ACTION OF LAW. "The rain . . . returneth not thither," void, without having effected the purpose for which it came. How is it that farmers are willing to put forth the labour of a whole year in order that they may have a gathering in at harvest-time? How is it that during the winter, and the spring, and the summer, they labour so hopefully, and wait so patiently? Because they know that the principles on which God carries on the processes of the material world are uniform and constant. So we conclude it is in the domain of spirit. There is uniform action of law. Notice this fact—1. In our own nature. Effects always follow causes in our life; actions always produce effects. 2. In relation to God. This is but one expression of the truth that He is faithful. (1) His purposes will surely be fulfilled. His ways are not as our ways. (2) His Word is powerful; it cannot be void. (3) His promises are sure. II. THE COMBINATION OF FORCES. The harvest which whitens the fields has not been produced by the action of one cause or process only. There have been mechanical action, physical action,

chemical action, vital action. The germ of life in the seed has been stimulated by heat, quickened by rain, fed by minerals, tended by man. Many unlikely things, too, have contributed to the result. The long, cold winter caused the land to lie dead; but that was a necessary preparation for the activity of spring. Storms and tempests beat upon the ground, snows in winter covered it as with a pall; but these were necessary in their place and at their time. The changes in the atmosphere, the variations in the temperature, the rest and coolness of night after the heat and glare of day, all helped to swell the grain, to draw forth the blade, to fill the ear. The processes of nature are carried on by the combination of numberless causes, many of these small and perhaps insignificant in themselves; and by the intermingling of various laws in almost infinite variety. So in our inner lives we find this fact, that many causes combine to produce results. Life is made up of an infinite combination of forces. 1. God has bestowed upon us many gifts. To one He has given quickness of perception; to another, clearness of reasoning powers; to another, strength of will; to another, power of invention; and so on. But these are not the only gifts He has bestowed upon each: and it is not by the use alone of one particular power that life is to be carried on. It is by the due combination of all. So in spiritual things, it is not by faith alone, or by hope alone, or by love alone, or by endurance alone, or by reading God's Word alone, or attending the means of grace alone, that our souls are to grow, that our characters are to be moulded. And sometimes the things which go to the moulding of our characters seem to us strange: the snows of winter sorrows settle round our hearts; the storms of difficulty and trial beat down upon us. We do not see how these can be necessary. But God sees, and He combines all causes, that He may lead to the best result. 2. So also it is with temptation. Hardly any sin is presented to us, or presents itself to us, in its naked reality. It comes clothed often in garments, if not of seeming righteousness, at least of negative purity. No temptation comes isolated; but mixed motives move us. We are, as it were, not so much in danger of being overwhelmed in a river, as of being beaten upon by successive drops of rain. 3. The possibility of usefulness comes to us not in one great offer, but a constant succession of small opportunities. III. EFFECTS ARE SLOWLY ATTAINED TO. Not all at once, not in a few moments, do the operations of nature effect their results. So it is in the working of life. There are no sudden effects. 1. Growth in grace should be our daily aim. 2. Growth in knowledge, too, is our privilege, not only of outward things, of the mysteries of creation, of the history of the past or the work of the present; but of God's Word. 3. Growth in strength may also be ours. The muscle that is used grows stronger by use. The spirit that exerts itself in the things of God, by God's blessing gains strength therein. (*J. S. Shields, D.D.*) *Analogy of the natural and the spiritual*:—I. THE ANALOGY OF NATURE TEACHES US THAT WHEN GOD CREATES A NEED IN HIS CREATURES, HE MAKES ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPLY THAT NEED. "Bread to the eater." Our bodies are so constituted as to need food. He who has so made them, has also arranged that the food shall be supplied. What about the soul's needs? God has so created it that it needs a food which the "constitution and course of nature" cannot give. It looks beyond the natural, and craves for the supernatural. We long for knowledge of things spiritual; for guidance and comfort in daily life; for a hope beyond the grave; for a sphere less trammelled by limitations and temptations. We feel, even the most careless, that sin is a burden which weakens and defiles and condemns. Has the great Architect and Designer made no provision for such wants as these? Yes. As it is in His workings in creation, so in the spiritual sphere: "So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth." God's Word is sent forth to give the knowledge of Himself. It tells of the living Bread which alone can satisfy the soul's need. It comes direct from God Himself. Written down by man, it is applied to the heart by God the Holy Spirit. Notice, therefore—1. Its absolute truth. It is not a series of speculations, or philosophizings, or aspirations; guesses of good or wise men, which may or may not be perfectly accurate. It is the Word of truth. 2. Its binding authority. It is the Word of a King. 3. Its unchanging faithfulness. It is ever reliable. Its promises are always "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." They are bank notes for which there is always a reserve of gold in the treasuries of heaven. 4. Its unutterable blessing. It tells of full comfort for the sorrowing; perfect rest for the weary; abiding peace for the distressed. Never grateful showers fell with greater refreshment on the parched and thirsty fields than the dew of God's Word on the weary and longing hearts of men. How important that we should receive that Word, obey its commands, rest on its promises, take heed to its warnings! II. THE ANALOGY

OF NATURE TEACHES US THAT WE MAY CO-OPERATE WITH GOD IN THE WORK OF ENLIGHTENING MANKIND. The harvest-fields supply not only bread to the eater, but "seed to the sower." The grain is not merely food—it is seed. Each contains the embryo of a plant. Placed in proper environment at the right time, that little life will cause movement amongst its surroundings, will weave a shoot, a blade, and an ear full of corn. Next year's harvest will not be gained by a direct creation of God, but by a due use of the grain of this. This in-gathering contains the promise and power of future crops; it not only will satisfy present needs, but it has an expansive, and extensive, and far-reaching possibility. So it is in the kingdom of grace. 1. The Christian's life should be extensive as well as intensive. He receives, not only that he may gain benefit, but that he may help others. 2. The effects of truth are germinant as well as satisfying. 3. The rule of work prevails in the spiritual as well as the natural harvest-fields. Because the grain is seed, the work of the husbandman becomes possible. If the life were not there, the labour of the year would be in vain. Because the grain is seed, the work of the husbandman is obligatory. It is God's rule that part of this harvest should be used for the next. It is God's command that man should co-operate in this great plan. It is also man's interest to do so. The produce of the ground is the fundamental and dominating source of wealth. So it is in spiritual things. Think of the possibilities of the Christian life. Think of the obligatory nature of Christian service. We may even speak of the analogy to our own interest. (*Ibid.*) *The rain and the Word:*—The Gospel is compared to rain and snow.—I. IN ITS ORIGIN. "From heaven." All truth is Divine. II. IN ITS OPERATION. "Watereth the earth." The Gospel changes the human heart and promotes and nourishes all that is good. III. IN ITS BENEFITS. "That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." The Gospel gives instruction, comfort, and strength to men, and brings forth a harvest of fruit for God. IV. IN ITS FINAL RESULTS. "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (*Homilist.*) *Christianity:*—These words suggest several ideas concerning Christianity. I. VARIETY. It is compared to the rain and the snow. 1. How varied in form. The rain comes down softly and gently, and sometimes in torrents; and the snow, too, has a variety of form. 2. How varied in distribution! How much falls on oceans, how much on sands and desert wastes and rocks, as well as on fertile soils! It is so with Christianity. As the Word of God, its forms are varied, it comes in history, poetry, philosophy, precept, example, menaces, and promises. How varied in distribution! It falls on every class of mankind, the literate and the illiterate, the hardened, the tender, the rich, the poor, etc. II. PRECIOUSNESS. How inestimably valuable the rain and snow to nature. How precious Christianity! It is the "water of life," etc. III. DIVINITY. "The rain cometh down and the snow from heaven." It is manifestly from above. So is Christianity. "It is," says God, "My Word that goeth forth out of My mouth." The Divinity of Christianity is clear from its congruity with the facts of universal history, the soul's *a priori* notions of a God, the spiritual intuitions and longings of mankind, and the deep moral wants of the world. It is, indeed, the "Word of God." IV. INEVITABLENESS. "It shall not return unto Me void." Not a drop of rain or a flake of snow is wasted. It may be swallowed up in the desert, but it is not lost. Every drop has a mission, and its mission will be fulfilled. 1. God in giving Christianity to the world had a purpose. 2. That purpose will be inevitably accomplished. If God has made a promise to the world and that purpose is not accomplished, it must be for one of three reasons: either—(1) He was insincere when He made it; or (2) He subsequently changed His mind; or (3) difficulties arose in the future, that baffled Him, which He never anticipated. All these are inadmissible, so that His Word shall not return unto Him void. (*Homilist.*) *The errand of the Word:*—Upon what errand has God sent forth His Word? "Ten thousand thousand are its tongues," and yet its work is one. It publishes "salvation" with all its tongues. For if it speak to the mourner, it would save him from the wasting effects of his grief; and if it speak to the wanderer, it would save him from the further loss of his time, and the final loss of himself, in the wrong paths on which he has entered: and if it speak to the busy, it would save them from spending labour on that which satisfieth not. This is the lesson He would have sink into the heart of dull unbelieving man as the rain does into the earth, that the heavenly errands of Nature are not more sure of success than the heavenly errands of Grace; that the God of husbandry is even more the God of the husbandman; that, if water nourishes the earth, much more truth nourishes the soul: that if God's bidding is done by the winds that carry about the clouds to

water the world, so also is it done—as surely, and in a higher way—by the Spirit that brings and dispenses to us the words of holy instruction and comfort. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *The return of God's Word:*—I. THE CERTAINTY. The great purpose of God cannot fail. II. THE MANNER. But, then, we read of messengers who went to the husbandmen that kept God's vineyard, and returned to Him empty-handed. "Why have ye not brought the fruit of the vineyard?" "There was no fruit, Lord, to bring. They have wasted the hours of labour, or consumed Thy fruit in their own revels." This is quite according to God's will—that men should be free to taste and try what manner of god folly is, what manner of reward sin can offer. God's messengers go once, twice, seven times. And, if needed, the Word goes forth to banish the husbandmen from the vineyard. The Word returns to God in many ways. It yields, by its operation, proofs that His charge against men is true; it yields fruits of patience in the souls of those who carry for God the rejected message; it produces, by the results of its rejection, the acknowledgment that it ought to have been accepted, and the disposition to accept it if it be again offered. If His word of mercy, on which men might rely, is not received by them, then His word of punishment, for which the rejected word has opened the way, goes forth into act; and this, by its action, may in turn prepare the way for another word of mercy, which is ready to go forth on its errand. So God's Word is always fruitful, however unfruitful we may be. III. THE MEASURE. In one sense all God's words are effective; that is to say, none shall be without its use, none without service rendered in illustration of His power and character. But some possible effects may not result, others coming in their stead; the conversion of a sinner, for instance, may not now result, but, in its place, there may be a display of God's forbearance toward him. And so a hundredfold may not now be the measure of success, but only sixtyfold or thirty. In measure, as in manner, God's always powerful Word returns to Him variously. IV. THE TIME. Our time is short, and God's time long. Therefore many of the returns His Word shall make Him, returns in the abundance and glory of which we too are interested, are of necessity, and most wisely, delayed. (*Ibid.*) *The Word of God likened to rain:*—I. IN REGARD TO ITS ORIGIN. II. FROM ITS ADAPTATION TO THE END WHICH IT IS INTENDED TO SERVE. The rain that descends from above softens and subdues the stubborn clod; it furnishes food for the whole vegetable kingdom, and thus also for the animal kingdom; it mollifies and warms the atmosphere—and as it is the means of dissipating those clouds of cold that intercept the genial rays of the sun, it is no less necessary for the progress and perfection of vegetation than the sun in all his glory. One of the finest objects in nature is the appearance which the earth presents after having been saturated with rain, when warmed and invigorated by the rays of the sun; and accordingly the Messiah is thus represented, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining after the rain." The Word of God is no less fitted for all those purposes of enlightening, convincing, converting, and comforting for which it is sent. III. WITH REGARD TO THE MANNER OF ITS OPERATION. The falling of the rain from the clouds in small drops is a remarkable instance of the wisdom of Him who is perfect in knowledge. When, at any time, as in the case of storms, it descends in torrents, this truth appears to us more obvious, as then, instead of refreshing the vegetable tribes, it carries desolation in its train. Such, in general, is the manner in which the Word operates upon the heart of man. The Spirit of God worketh where, and when, and how He pleaseth, by the Word generally, yet not always—sometimes by alarming dispensations of providence, and sometimes by the voice of conscience speaking within us. The Word of God is the great means which He employs for the salvation of sinners; the rain is the great means which He employs for the fructifying the earth: in the ordinary course of providence, the one acts in a gradual imperceptible manner; in the ordinary course of His grace, this is the way in which the other operates. IV. THE WORD IS LIKENED TO RAIN IN THIS RESPECT—"It watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." The great benefits that flow to the people of God from the Word, are set forth under the figures of bread to the eater, and seed to the sower; or, in other words, present support and future provision. V. THE WORD MAY BE LIKENED TO RAIN, WITH REGARD TO THE CERTAINTY OF ITS PRODUCING THE INTENDED EFFECT. VI. THE WORD MAY BE LIKENED TO RAIN, INASMUCH AS ITS EFFICACY DEPENDS ENTIRELY UPON THE DIVINE BLESSING. VII. THE WORD MAY BE LIKENED TO RAIN, INASMUCH AS WHILE THE EFFICACY IN BOTH CASES DEPENDS UPON THE BLESSING OF GOD, IN NEITHER CASE IS THIS

BLESSING TO BE EXPECTED TO THE EXCLUSION OF OUR ENDEAVOURS. (*C. Adie, D.D.*) *The certain success of evangelistic labour:*—We argue the certainty of success in evangelistic labour. I. FROM THE NATURE OF DIVINE TRUTH. There is something in the quality and characteristics of the doctrine which we are commanded to preach to every creature, that promises and prophesies a triumph. The Word of God is both living and quickening. This is implied in the figure which the prophet Isaiah employs in the text. This is the declaration of God Himself, who understands the intrinsic nature of His own revelation; and by it teaches us that there is no greater adaptedness in moisture to fructify the ground, and germinate a corn of wheat, than there is in Biblical doctrine to renew and convert a human soul. For the truth which the evangelist scatters upon the printed page, or teaches from his own lips, is superhuman. In this fact, there is great encouragement to diligence and perseverance, upon the part of every disciple of Christ, to proclaim Divine truth in every form and manner possible. Revealed truth is immortal. It can never perish. Not only is Divine truth immortal in its nature, but it can never be expelled from the mind. Teach a child or a man, for example, the true Biblical doctrine of sin; fix it in his mind that God abhors wickedness, and will punish it everlastingly, and you have imparted something to him which he can never get rid of. And on the other side of revelation, all this is equally true. The peace-speaking promises of mercy, the doctrine of the Divine pity, of the forgiveness of sins and the preparation for eternal life—all this portion of Divine truth when once imparted is never again expelled. Even if, owing to the inveteracy of vice, or the torpidity of the conscience, or the obstinacy of the proud heart, the soul goes into the presence of God unforgiven, still the truths of the Gospel will be a portion of the soul's knowledge through all eternity; the evidence of what it might have secured, and the index of what it has lost. II. FROM THE FACT THAT GOD FEELS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN HIS OWN WORD. The Scriptures warrant us in asserting that God is more profoundly concerned for the success of that body of truth which He has revealed to mankind in the Scriptures, than for the spread and influence of all other ideas and truths whatsoever. This is the only species of truth which He personally watches over, and accompanies with a Divine influence. The "wisdom of this world" is "foolishness" with Him. "My Word," says God, "shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Here is personal interest, and personal supervision. You may proclaim all your days your own ideas, or those of your fellow-men, but you will say with Grotius, at the close of a long and industrious career which had by no means been exclusively devoted to humanistic learning, "I have spent my life in laboriously doing nothing." III. FROM THE ACTUAL INSTANCES OF SUCCESS FURNISHED BY THE ANNALS OF SUCH LABOUR. Christianity must be from God, argued Justin Martyr and Tertullian, "because it makes the voluptuous man chaste, the avaricious man liberal, the man of cursing a man of prayer, the implacable enemy a forgiving friend, converts wrath into gentleness, debauchery into temperance, and vice of manifold form into manifold virtue." The fruits evince the reality, and the quality of the tree. We find what we may call the realism of Christianity in the evangelizing operations of the Church. The power of Biblical truth even when not proclaimed by the voice of the evangelist is continually receiving demonstration from this same source. The records of Bible and Tract Societies are full of instances in which the bare text of Scripture led to the conversion of a human soul. There is no surer evidence that the truths of the Gospel are destined to prevail, than the fact that they do prevail. From the subject as thus discussed, we infer the duty of great courage, and confidence, in the work of evangelizing men. (*G. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. **So shall My Word be.**—*Finality of the Divine purpose:*—I. TRUTH IN ITS MISSION. "It shall accomplish that which I please," etc. 1. We may take our first illustration of this mission from the spirit and contents of the truth itself. It is "the Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Nature is the Word of His power. The Bible is the Word of His mouth. That belongs to the few who have the key or can find it: this is in language vernacular to the race. These two records are equally true in what they teach; but their teaching is in different dialects. Nature is a system of material facts: the "Word" is a revelation of supernatural thought. One is a manifestation of being: the other is a declaration of will. The one appeals to the senses and thence to the reason, making science: the other is a voice from within the veil, speaking to the consciousness of faith, creating a religion. Hence, while the teaching of the two records is equally Divine

and true, their methods of teaching are essentially distinct. That something is at the back of all the complex and orderly working of nature, accounting for and actuating it, which itself is not nature, is patent to all who think. What that something is, is nowhere apparent. We see only phenomena. But "the entrance of Thy Word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." The one grand secret that has put the Bible down into the heart of man and made it the most precious, as it is the most potent, of his treasures, is this directness and power of its witness. 2. Then, there is the regeneration the truth is intended to effect. "It is the power of God unto salvation." It "effectually worketh." There is a method in this regenerating process. First of all, life is to be infused into dead souls. In the prospective history of humanity as that contemplates a state of future perfected being, we have a still further insight into this mission of truth. Paul, when affirming the scope of his own ministry, enunciates this thought: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The one type after which this perfection is to be constructed is "Christ Jesus." There is this final result. "That we may present every man perfect in Christ"—man in his nationalities, in his generations, in his separate individualities, to the end of the ages, perfected by the truth. This is its mission. II. THE OBSTRUCTIONS THE TRUTH HAS TO ENCOUNTER. "It shall not return void," etc. On the magnitude of the conflict depends the greatness and glory of its victory. There are obstructions arising from the nature of the truth itself, and from the disposition of man. 1. Truth is a holy thing; it can fraternize only with what is kindred to its own spirit: man is not a holy being. Hence antagonism. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." In the natural world, there are ten thousand things which we cannot see with the naked eye: they can be reached only by an extra-natural sense. So it is in the kingdom of God. "They are spiritually discerned." 2. Truth is dogmatic in its teaching. It speaks "as one having authority." It has little consideration for the whims or passions of men. It postulates rather than argues its positions. Against this lofty dogmatism of inspired truth man lifts up his heel of proud contempt. 3. It was said by a distinguished sceptic of the eighteenth century, that if the solution of one of Euclid's problems could be shown to war against the selfishness or the pride of the human heart, there would not be wanting men to contradict it. A startling concession, and yet a conceivable fact. Euclid's problems do not touch our moral nature. They provoke no suspicion. It is otherwise with the truth. It reveals what we are shy of discovering. It affirms what we dislike to believe, and therefore wish to doubt. It asks what we are unwilling to yield. It puts in a plea for all rights which place themselves on the side of God; and so makes confession of our wrong-doing a first step in our becoming right with God. III. UNDER THESE DIFFICULTIES, TRUTH HAS ITS ENCOURAGEMENTS. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven—so shall My Word be." Here are grounds of confidence. 1. There is the relation truth sustains to a purpose. 2. There is the connection of truth with a suitable agency. And this directness of supernatural agency carries over the truth from its relation to a purpose into the efficiency of an act. When the telegraph sends its message through the air or under the sea, there is something more than electricity at work. There is a mind, a personal intelligence, from whose directive will that electricity gets its action. So in the efficiency of truth. It supposes a power not in the truth, not in man, but in God; a power which, however inscrutably to us, works after its own methods—going down to the conscience, and up to the intellect, conquering prejudice, and silencing doubt, and turning men "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." 3. There is confidence in the end which this Word is to accomplish. "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." What is that thing? There is the promise of the Father: "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." This is already done in purpose, but not in effect. There is the advent of the Spirit. There is the glory of the Church. There is the millennium of man. There is the triumph of the Cross. God's time-plan sweeps through our human centuries, making a day out of a thousand years, and a thousand years into a day. 4. There is the calm, dignified attitude of truth in view of opposition. "It shall not return unto Me void; it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Shall it? Then the Divine and the human plans are manifestly in collision. Men say it shall not prosper. "It shall prosper." Then the fears of the timid and the calm determination of the Divine mind are not

in harmony. "It shall accomplish that which I please." Then the machinations of the adversary must be defeated. "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Then man universally shall receive and know and obey the truth; for to man singly, and to man as a race, "is the Word of this salvation sent." (*J. Burton.*) *The efficiency of God's Word:*—The rain and the snow are sapped into the earth, and then incorporated in the grain, resulting in seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Similarly, the published Word, being assimilated into the human mind, fashions thought, moulds character, regenerates life; and therefore it does not return void to its Author. And even though it should be humanly rejected, it still would not return void; individual hearing creates individual responsibility, and hence leaves no one in the same place. The horizon of hope being unbrightened, the reverse side of despair casts up sooner or later. The operations of the Word are partly visible and partly invisible. Finite creatures observe the former; it wants Omniscience to penetrate the latter. For this reason God only can determine what His Word is really doing. Let us then consider—I. THE WORD IN ITS PECULIAR REVERSES. These are more apparent than real. The Word of God has sometimes carried His forces up to the heights of actual and visible victory; and at other times they have been allowed to fall back as if into shades of retreat, peradventure beneath bowers of sanctified calm. But retreat does not stand for surrender, though it may appear so to the unspiritual mind. Things are not necessarily what they seem; there are under-currents, silent influences, which demonstrate themselves, in some instances, only after a time. Denominations, associations, Churches, missions, and individual Christians have been known to get down to a low spiritual level; and yet, as if out of the ruins of a once flourishing past, great waves of revival have risen up and borne them into celestial altitudes, where they have gone on their way rejoicing. II. THE WORD IN ITS ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS. "It shall accomplish that which I please." We are here confronted with the Word under four divisions—Promise, Law, Prophecy, Gospel. The outstanding promise of the Abrahamic period that Christ should arise from the seed of Abraham became an accomplished fact when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The law, with its manifold observances, also saw its end and accomplishment in Christ. Prophecy, although it covers a wide range, has waited long enough to see itself come true for the most part; it shall wait a little longer, and then it will see itself worked out in full. Through this treble word—Promise, Law, Prophecy—God was pleased to accomplish what may be summed up as the prelude to a spiritual kingdom. Then there is the further word, the Gospel, which outlines the principles on which the spiritual kingdom is founded and worked. The Gospel is our charter; through it God accomplishes that which pleases Him even now—namely, the salvation of sinners. How far the Gospel has wrought towards the fulfilling of God's saving purpose up to the present, no one can tell but Himself. III. THE WORD IN ITS DISTINCTIVE AIM. "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." What is that thing? To bring mankind to a knowledge of His will. Whoever has felt the power of the Word within his own soul is himself an illustration of its efficacy. Also, whatever spiritual advancement accrues to believers through perusing the Word, in them likewise it may be said to prosper. But above all, when the mansions of glory are possessed, God may then point to that great multitude which no man can number, and say, "These are they that have come out of great tribulation." They will be His witness that His Word had prospered in the thing whereto He sent it. Considering the verse as a whole, it gives out an explicit promise. It contains a fourfold "shall." What scope for the exercise of faith! (*H. Edwards.*) *Spring-time in nature and grace:*—I. THE DOWN-COMING. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven." Our spring begins with April showers alternating with rough winds. So it is spiritually; the down-coming of the Word of God is to our hearts like the falling of the rain from heaven. Concerning this down-coming, I may say—1. It is usually unpleasant. We are accustomed to speak of rainy weather, and especially of snowy weather, as "bad" weather. When we spiritually begin to live, it is usually rough weather, and we are apt to think it is bad weather. Drip, drip, drip, fall showers of repentance. Snowflake after snowflake falls, and buries all our hopes; our joys are covered, as with a winding-sheet. 2. It differs very much in its method, for rain and snow do not always come down in the same way. Sometimes the rain falls very gently, we can hardly tell whether it is rain or not. Our Scotch friends would call it "a mist." At another time, the rain, like Jehu the son of Nimshi, drives furiously. So, there are some to whom God's Word comes very softly. There are others to whom it

comes very terribly. 3. It differs also in time and in quantity. One shower is quickly over, and another lasts all day and all night. The snow may in one season fall heavily for a few hours only; at another time, a week of snow may be experienced. So, the work of Divine grace, when it begins in the soul, is not very manifestly the same in different persons. Some of us were for years subject to the operations of God's Spirit, and endured much pain and sorrow before we found peace in believing. Others find Christ in a few minutes, and leap out of darkness into light by a single spring. 4. It is always a blessing, and never a curse. If the rain should pour down very heavily, and continue to fall until we might be led to think that the very heavens would weep themselves away, yet, it never can produce a flood that would drown the world, for yonder in the heavens is the bow of the covenant. These rains must mean blessing. And if the snow should fall never so deep, yet not even by snow will God destroy the earth any more than by a flood. So, when God's grace comes streaming into the heart, it may produce deep conviction, it may sweep away the refuges of lies, it may cover up and bury beneath its fall every carnal hope; but it cannot be a flood to destroy you. There shall yet come a change of weather for you, and your soul shall live. II. THE ABIDING. "It returneth not thither, but watereth the earth." So is it spiritually; when God's grace falls from heaven, it comes to stay. 1. When God sends His grace from heaven, you may know it by this sign, that it soaks into your soul. 2. It fertilizes it, it makes the soul bring forth and bud. The metaphor of my text cannot set forth the whole truth, for this Word of God, which is the rain, is also the seed. What should we think of clouds that rained down the seeds? The Word of God is the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; and whenever that seed is sown, God's Word comes soaking into the soul, making the soul to live. 3. It works in the man whatsoever God pleases, all His Divine purpose. "It shall accomplish," etc. III. THE RESULTS of the down-coming and the abiding. What happens? 1. It makes the earth to bring forth and bud. There is nothing more beautiful than the rosebud; it is more charming by far than the full-blown rose; and the buds of all manner of flowers have a singular charm about them. But when the grace of God has come into a young man's heart, we very soon see his buds; he has gracious purposes, holy resolves, the beginnings of prayer; he has the makings of a man of God about him. 2. If you are what the Lord would have you to be, you will not long be content with buds. If you serve the Lord, and the Lord continues to visit you with showers of blessing, you will soon bring forth seed for the sower. You yourself will become useful to others; your experience, your knowledge, your service, will become the seed of good for other people. 3. Grace also makes us produce bread for the eater. If you consecrate yourselves to Christ, and come under the saturating influence of the Divine Word, you do not know how many lips you may feed, nor how many your word may convert to Christ. 4. The result of Divine grace upon the heart is very singular, so that I can hardly bring it under the metaphor of rain and snow, for it works a transformation. When rain falls on a plot of ground, if it is covered with weeds, it makes the weeds grow; but in the spiritual realm, the rain that comes down from heaven itself sows the ground with good seed. What is more singular, where it falls, it transforms the ground, and the plants that come under its influence change their nature. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." When the grace of God comes into the soul, it takes the obnoxious things in us, and transmutes them into blessings. IV. THE REJOICING. The music of the year is full in spring-time. 1. In spring-time, one cause of happiness is new life. We have come into a new life; the Holy Ghost has breathed upon us. 2. Another source of joy in spring-time is to be found in our happy surroundings. It is beginning to be warm; we hope soon to be able to sit out of doors in the sunshine. And is it not so with us spiritually? We are no longer in bondage and fear. Reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ, we joy in God. 3. Spring-time is peculiarly pleasant because of its large promise. We are thinking of the hay harvest and of the fruit of the field. We are reckoning upon luscious grapes, and upon the various fruits which faith sees to be hidden within the blossoms. But may not our hopes be disappointed if we reckon upon earthly fruits? But you and I have come, by grace, into a land of hope most sure and steadfast. We have hopes grounded on God's Word, and they shall never be disappointed. 4. In spring-time there always seems to me to be a peculiar sense of Divine power and Divine presence throughout all nature. It is as if Nature had swooned awhile, and lay in her cold fit through the winter; but now she has been awakened, her Lord has looked her in the face, and charmed her back to life again. Some say that there is no God. We have

had dealings with God, personal dealings with Him, as when the sun, though it be ninety-five millions of miles away, has commerce with the earth, and the bulbs that sleep beneath the black mould begin to swell and upheave, and by and by the yellow cup is held up to be filled with the light of the sun. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's Word productive of good:*—A distributor gave a tract to a young man, accompanying it with some words expressive of a serious and affectionate desire for his salvation. The young man, upon the departure of the missionary, threw the pages into the fire; but as they curled up in the flame, his eye caught the words: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." As these words turned to ashes in the fire, they turned to fire in his mind. He found no rest, until he found it in the blood of atonement. This was an actual occurrence. (*G. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **For ye shall go out with joy.**—*The reversals of pardoning mercy:*—The wealth of God's abundant pardon is here set forth in metaphors which the least imaginative can understand. Not only were the exiles forgiven, their warfare accomplished, their iniquity pardoned; but they would be restored to the land of their fathers—"Ye shall go out . . . ye shall be led forth . . ." Not only were they to be restored; but their return was to be one long triumphal march. Nature herself would celebrate it with joyful demonstration; mountains and hills would break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field would clap their hands. But even this was not all. One of the necessary results of the depopulation of the land of Israel was the deterioration of the soil. Vast tracts had passed out of cultivation; the terraces, reared on the slopes of the hills with so much care, had become heaps of stones; where corn had waved in the rustling breeze, or luscious fruits had ripened in the autumn sunshine, there was the sad fulfilment of the prediction, "They shall smite upon their breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briars" (Isa. xxxii. 12, 13). But this, too, was to be reversed. Literally and metaphorically, there was to be a complete reversal of the results of former sins and backslidings. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God's dealings with the soul in grace:*—To the Jew in Isaiah's time this promise doubtless bore reference to three things: the return from the seventy years' captivity; their ultimate restoration, first to their own land, and then to Christ; and God's way of dealing with each individual's own soul. To us it stands only in the last reference; to us the words are simply spiritual. I. THE GOING OUT appears to relate to that great moral exodus when a man emerges from a state of nature into a state of grace, from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light, from the world to Christ. This is indeed to be with joy. II. THE BEING LED FORTH denotes the further experiences of the Christian,—God's conduct of him by the way; his future courses, and especially the manner in which he is brought out at last—out of this life into a better; and all this is to be "with peace." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *What is joy?* 1. Novelty of perception. It is a wonderfully new feeling when a soul first tastes the promises and grasps its own interest in Christ. 2. Keenness of perception. Keen is the first sense of sin to a penitent, and keen is the first sense of pardon to a believer. In that early dawn the soul's atmosphere is so clear that every object stands out in its distinctness. 3. Sweetness of perception. Sweeter are those perceptions than they are keen. Are they not the touches of the Holy Ghost? They are all about beautiful things—saints and angels, a holy heaven, and a perfect Jesus. (*Ibid.*) "*And be led forth with peace:*"—As we go on in the spiritual life the sense of sin grows deeper and deeper; and a deep sense of weakness, nothingness, and guilt, combining with a fuller sense of pardon and love, makes joy peace. To a mind led and taught of God all the changes and chances of life lend themselves to peace. A great affliction is a deep fountain of peace; the very agitation hushes, and it makes all troubles afterwards so very small. Another and another promise fulfilled every day is always enlarging the rock underneath our feet. Another and another answer to prayer is always strengthening the arguments for the future. Another and another new drop of the knowledge of Christ is always swelling the tide, till the "peace flows like a river," because we see the "righteousness of Christ" as the waves of the sea. (*Ibid.*) *The effect produced by the Gospel:*—I. AN EFFECT THE MOST JOYFUL. Joy to whom? 1. To themselves. "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head." Lord Chesterfield said, "I hope I shall never be what they call converted, for I should be the most miserable man upon earth;" not considering that this change would have produced a change in his taste, and that he would

have been able to relish things which he disliked before. He to talk of religion making him miserable! Why, does he not, in one of his letters, tell us that he had always been wretched—that he had always found the world a cheat—and that he was now leaving it, not because he was reconciled to it, but because he was compelled; and that, since time had become his enemy, he was endeavouring to sleep away the remainder of it in a carriage? Bolingbroke, too, said, "I now find in my affliction that my philosophy fails me." But the Christian's religion does not fail him in the day of trouble. 2. To their fellow-Christians. There is no room for envy here, for there is enough for others as well as for yourselves, and enough for all. 3. To their pious friends, connections and relations. They had given them many a pang before. 4. Joy to ministers. When they observe the success of their labours, they resemble the husbandman, who, after his ploughing, manuring and sowing, goes forth and sees, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. 5. Joy to the angels. 6. Joy to the Mediator. 7. Joy to God Himself. "The pleasure of the Lord," says Isaiah, "shall prosper in his hand." "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." II. AN EFFECT THE MOST TRANSFORMING. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree," etc. III. AN EFFECT THE MOST HONOURABLE TO GOD. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off." (*W. Jay.*)

Ver. 13. **Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.**—*The briar:*—The word for briar (*ṣirpād*) is unknown. LXX. renders Κόνυζα (fleabane). All that can be said is that some desert plant is meant. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The Lord's name and memorial:*—These words are a poetical description of great moral changes which the Gospel works wherever it comes. At the same time they are not solely poetical, for wherever the spiritual change comes the physical change is almost sure to follow. As men are elevated the earth yields her increase more largely. Look at the field of the sluggard, and the garden of the industrious! Look over the wild wastes of Africa, and then see the fertility of the same soil when tilled by the missionary's converts! The surest way to benefit men in their outward circumstances is to bless them spiritually. I. THE EFFECTIVE AGENCY here spoken of. I do not find in this fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah that the cause of the spiritual miracles of my text is a gospel of forms and ceremonies. Nor do I find here a gospel of dogmas and orthodoxies, of rigid creeds, and infallible statements. But I learn a Gospel of quite another sort, more Divine, more glorious by far. 1. A Gospel revealing Divine provision for man's necessity, and earnestly inviting man to partake of it (ver. 1). 2. This Gospel is as free as the air, for do we not read over and over again, "Buy without money and without price," and are not those invited to come who have no money? 3. It is a Gospel of hearing and not of doing. "Hearken diligently." "Incline your ear." "Hear and your soul shall live." Death came to us first through the eye, but salvation comes through the ear. 4. Running your eye down the chapter you will notice that the great means God makes use of for turning deserts into gardens is the Gospel founded on a covenant, a covenant made with David's Lord and Son. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." 5. Isaiah describes a Gospel whose success is guaranteed. "Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." But you may call often, and men will not come; in this case, however, they shall come. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow," etc. 6. The Gospel which Isaiah speaks of is full of grace and encouragement (vers. 6–9). II. THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL. The change depicted in this verse is very radical, for a little observation will convince you that it is a change in the soil. The verse does not say, "Instead of the thorn God shall plant the fir tree." No! but as the thorn coming up naturally by itself indicates such-and-such a condition of soil, so fir trees shall spring up by themselves spontaneously, indicating an altogether radical change in the earth beneath. When God encloseth a heart that has laid common, does He cut down the thorns and the briars, and then plant fir trees? No! but He so changes the soil that from the ground itself there spontaneously starts up the fir tree and the myrtle. This is a miracle which man cannot accomplish, a marvel which only the grace of God can work, and which gives to God His highest glory. Note the poetic metaphor which describes the outward change. 1. A thorn is the conspicuous emblem of the curse. Upon many ungodly men there is very evidently the curse, while upon all it really rests. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. 2. A thorn is a fruitless thing. Look at it, and see how

barren it is. God gets neither prayer nor praise from the ungodly man. 3. A thorn, too, is a repulsive thing—there is nothing inviting about it; nobody would choose to make it a pillow or a companion. Some Christless persons are naturally amiable; but many and many a man, especially when sin has come to a head with him, is a thorn-hedge, a churl, an unsympathizing, selfish being. 4. Again, the thorn is a rending thing, offending, noxious. So has it been with ungodly men, when unrestrained by grace. Like Saul of Tarsus, they breathe out vengeance against God and His people. 5. As for the metaphor of the briar used in the text, it was always the emblem of desolation. The briar came up on the desolate walls of Babylon and Nineveh; the briar covered the land of Israel, when the inhabitants were carried away captive. In how many human hearts where the Gospel has not come is there desolation, sadness, despair? 6. The briar, too, is a thing that cumbers the ground; it occupies the place of the palm or of the fig; and so ungodly men cumber the ground; they do no good; they occupy spheres in which others might have served God; they are altogether wasters, they rob God, they bring Him no revenue of glory. 7. The briar is soon to be cut down, and when cut down no use can be made of it; it is burnt; it is put away. Such is the future history of the unconverted man. III. THE GLORIOUS ISSUE. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Jehovah might, if He willed, have taken other names; He might have selected other works of His hands to be the ensigns of His glory, but He has chosen the results of the Gospel to be His proudest honours; He has, if I may use such a term, staked His eternal majesty upon the effects of Gospel grace. With the heathen their gods took names from what were thought to be their most glorious work. We read of Jove, the thunderer, because they imagined that he launched the bolt from his hand. They spoke of the far-darting Apollo—the rays of light flashing from the sun. They talked of the cruel Juno in the wars of Troy. If Jehovah, the one only true God, had chosen, He might have been "Jehovah, the Thunderer;" we might have read of the far-darting God; we might have had Him constantly portrayed in Scripture as the terrible and avenging Lord; but He hath not chosen such a name; He hath not been pleased to select anything that is terrible as His peculiar glory, but that which is full of melting mercy and tender pity. The Lord has acted wisely, as He always does, in selecting such a matter as this to be His name, to be a display of Himself, because it is everlasting. Let this encourage Christians. If it is God's glory to save man, expect to have them saved and go to work to save them. To you who are unconverted! How this ought to encourage you to come to God in Christ Jesus! Is it to His glory to save you? Then He will do it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The effects of the Gospel:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE TRANSFORMATION. "Instead of the thorn," etc. 1. Naturally, there is no difference between men as to their state. 2. Grace makes a difference. II. THE RELATION OF THIS TRANSFORMATION TO GOD. "And it shall be to the Lord for a name," etc. 1. It is supposed that this work is the work of God. And it is, and must be so; and the very quality of the effect shows its origin and Author. 2. This is to be to Him for "a name," that is a praise; and therefore you will find both words used together in another passage—"They shall be to Me for a name and a praise." And the latter is explanatory of the former. 3. It "shall be to the Lord," not only for "a name," but for "a sign." A sign is a manifestation, a token. Now the conversion of souls to God is a kind of moral miracle; it is a striking display on the part of God towards man. 4. Observe the duration of this. "An everlasting sign." (*W. Jay.*) *Spiritual development:*—This is the predicted result of the things that are described and promised in the former part of the chapter. I. THE NECESSARY GROWTH. The human soul will grow. It will put forth from its soil and substance natural and moral products of some kind. There may be thorn and briar, or there may be fir tree and myrtle tree, but there will be something. There are no responsible human souls absolutely barren. There seems to be a certain amount of force in the human soul—a certain amount of what may be called organic vitality, which will be out into forms and habits, speech and behaviour, character and life; and you cannot keep it down, do what you will. II. THE FIRST CROP IS THE THORN AND BRIAR. These are indigenous to the soil; the things that will appear if nothing is done. Our state is so depraved that evil principles, affections and habits will take priority of anything good that may be left in us. Our views of sin will affect our views of almost everything else. III. THERE IS A SECOND CROP. These trees are taken, apparently, AS EMBLEMS OF THE BETTER LIFE, ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR GREAT BEAUTY AND USEFULNESS. We find the fir tree very often used by the sacred writers, with

the cedar. Thus—"The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters are fir." Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, "I will do all thou desirest concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir." "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon." Indeed, some think that the tree here mentioned, called the fir tree, was the cedar, and some think it was the cypress. Probably the word is generic, and has reference to trees of that kind. Trees, like the cypress and cedar, were grand to the sight and refreshing to the traveller who stood under their shadow; and the wood of them was so hard and excellent that it was much used for the building of temples, for ships, for musical instruments, for lances to be used in war, and even for statues, on account of its great durability. We see the idea here suggested. What is strong, useful, beautiful, takes the place of what is prickly, useless, wasteful. A change like that in a landscape would be an emblem of what takes place in a human soul and life, when a natural man becomes a spiritual man. In a well-tilled Gospel field we should not see much of a thorn and briar from the very first. In family gardens they should not be suffered to grow—at least, every endeavour should be made to prevent it, and to rear the fir tree and the myrtle tree, and to draw out unto them the strength which otherwise will certainly go to nourish the hurtful and wasteful things. It is to be feared that some Christians, parents and others, have radically erroneous conceptions on this point. They hold the doctrine of natural depravity shelteringly, almost lovingly, the same almost as if they held it to be their duty to draw out that depravity in order to prove it. Certainly these thorns and briars will grow up if we let them, but instead of them let us have the fir tree and the myrtle tree so early and so fully that we shall never see the former at all. IV. THE PERPETUAL BEAUTY. That must be beautiful and good which the Lord takes for a name, and regarding which He says, "Let Me be known by it." It is so even now. When God speaks of Himself He does not point to His name up amid the stars—systems and fields of wide illimitable space. He does not speak of earthquakes and violence; of majestic clouds, and stormy seas. He points to His new-born children—who bear His image, who reflect His glory—whose souls enshrine His awful name—who are set for ever to be the praise of the glory of His grace, "for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." The Gospel even in this world is an indestructible thing. It is erecting signs of its power far more enduring than the pictures of the learned and the statues of the brave. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Good latent in the heart:*—A gentleman who has had long experience of life in America, and who has watched the forests of Canada, told me that when they cut down there the natural growth—the thorns and the briars—the wild birch, that is not good for much—the maple, and other such trees—there do not grow up again the same trees that were cut down. Strange to say, the fir tree springs up all over the ground. It is as if the seeds of the fir were held there latent, waiting the opportunity, and no sooner is the opportunity given than they spring up and grow. Is not that an emblem of grace, the seeds of which may have been sown in the heart long ago by early instruction, by impressions made in former years, or by more recent impressions of a religious kind? Is not that an indication of how these seeds will spring up at once if you but lay the axe to the root of these other trees, and bring them to the ground? (*Ibid.*) *The transformation of God's grace:*—"An everlasting sign!" That surely indicates that sacred lessons are hidden under this prediction, which are of permanent interest and importance. Let us seek them in the light of other Scriptures. "Unto Adam He said, Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." "And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on His head." "There was given me a thorn in the flesh. . . . Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." I. THE THORNS AND BRIARS OF LIFE. In many cases we reap what others have sown; in some we sow for ourselves; in others we suffer from our neglect. We have failed to use our opportunities; and therefore crops of rank growth cover the acres of the past, and thistledown hovers in clouds, threatening the future. 1. Ill-health is surely one. For some, the excesses of their ancestors—for others, their own—have sown the furrows with the seeds of bitter harvests, which they have no alternative than to reap. Dyspepsia, cancer, the slow progress of paralysis along the spinal cord, nervous weakness and depression—these are some of the many ills to which our flesh is heir, and they are thorns indeed. Paul's thorn was probably ophthalmia. 2. Bad children are another. Did David not mean this when he said that his house was not so with God; and that the ungodly, like thorns, must be thrust away with the armed hand? When the

daughters make unfortunate marriages, and sons spread their sails to every gale of passion, there are thorns and briars enough to make misery in the best-appointed and most richly furnished homes. 3. Strong predispositions and tendencies towards evil may be classed among the thorns. To be of a jealous or envious temperament; to have an inordinate love for praise and flattery; to be cursed with the clinging habit of impurity, intemperance or greediness; to be of an irascible or phlegmatic disposition; and to be so liable to doubts that all the affirmations of fellow-disciples fall on dull and irresponsive ears—this is to be beset with thorns and briars, as though all the goodness of a field should go to waste in weeds. 4. Compulsory association with uncongenial companions in the workshop or the home. 5. Difficulties that bar our progress, like hedges of prickly thorns in some tangled forest, may be included in this enumeration. Competition in commercial life makes thorny the path of many a man of business. Perplexities and worries, annoyances and vexations, fret us almost beyond endurance. Each life has experiences like these. Surely, we argue, we could live nobler and more useful lives, if only we were free. "Not so," says the Lord. "I cannot take away the thorn—it is the only means of royalty for thee; but I will give thee My all-sufficient grace." II. ROYALTY THROUGH THORNS. It is very remarkable that the sign of the curse became, on the brow of Christ, the insignia of royalty. The lesson is obvious—that He has transformed the curse into a blessing; that He has discovered the secret of compelling it to yield royalty. There was some dim hint of this in the words of the primæval curse on the ground, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles it shall bring forth unto thee." What can this mean, except that there was an ulterior design in this infliction on the material world? It is not very clear what is implied in this sentence on the ground. Almost certainly there were thorns and thistles before Adam's sin brought a blight on God's fair world; but probably from that moment they became more prolific, or the conditions that had been unfavourable to their growth became more favourable, or malign hands were permitted to scatter their seeds afar. But, however, it befell, there can be no doubt that God's purpose was wholly benevolent. Cursed is the ground for thy sake; that is, out of the obduracy of the soil, and its tendency to breed thorns and thistles, will come to thee the best and highest blessing. Surely this has been verified. Where has man attained his noblest development? In lands where kindly Nature has been most prodigal of her good gifts? where the soil has only needed scratching to yield a bountiful return? where life has been free from care, as that of bees among the limes? No! not there. By the bountiful provision of all they needed for their sustenance and comfort, Nature has enervated her children, men have become inert and sensual, ease-loving and muscleless. But where the soil has been unkindly, the climate inhospitable, the struggle for existence hard, the presence of the thorn ever menacing the cultivated patch, and threatening to invade garden or field; where every endeavour has been required to wring subsistence from the unwilling ground—there man has arisen to his full height, and put forth all his glorious strength of brain and sinew. Probably this is what is meant in the thorn-crown on the brow of Christ. It teaches that man can only attain his true royalty by meeting, enduring and overcoming these elements in life which forebode only disaster and loss. What a magnificent conception this gives of the possibilities of sorrow! In proportion as we patiently submit ourselves to our Father's appointment, we come to see the reasonableness and beneficence of His design, and find ourselves adopting the thistle as our badge; we discover that it has been the means of unfolding and perfecting our character, of giving royalty and dignity to our demeanour, and making us kings by right of conquest, as well as by right of birth. III. THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF GRACE. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar the myrtle tree." "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "I will, therefore, glory in My infirmities." 1. God gives us new views of dark things. What we thought was punishment, turns out to be the chastening of a Father's love. The thorns change to myrtles when God shows His reasons. 2. God makes our sorrow and losses occasions for giving more grace. There are two ways of helping the soul bent double under some crushing burden. It may be removed; or additional strength, equal to its weight, may be inbreathed. The latter is God's choice way of dealing with His children. And if we were wise, we should not pray for the extraction of the thorn, but claim the greater grace. 3. The grace of God actually transforms awkward and evil dispositions, both in ourselves and others. Softness becomes meekness; cowardice gentleness; impulsiveness enthusiasm; meanness thrift; niggardliness generosity; cruelty consideration for

others; irritability and vehemence patience and longsuffering. God did not destroy the Roman Catholic pulpits at the Reformation—He did better, He filled them with Gospel-preachers. Similarly, He does not destroy any of our natural characteristics, when He brings us to Himself; He only eliminates the evil and develops the good. The thorns of passion and temper are replaced by fir trees, and the briars by myrtles. 4. When the discipline has done its work, it is removed. These glowing predictions were partially fulfilled in the restoration of Israel under Ezra and Nehemiah; and no doubt they would have been more fully realized if there had been more perfect faith in the Divine promises. These glowing words, however, shall be perfectly fulfilled in those coming days when Israel shall turn to the land from all lands whither her people have been scattered. Their conversion, the apostle tells us, shall inaugurate the times of refreshing, of which the prophets have spoken from the beginning of the world. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **An everlasting sign.**—*A token and sign of Gospel redemption*:—1. The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to Gospel times. 2. It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. (1) Gospel grace will set those at liberty that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out, and be led forth. Christ shall make them free. (2) It will fill those with joy that were melancholy (Ps. xiv. 7). (3) It will make a great change in men's characters. (4) In all this God shall be glorified. (*M. Henry.*)

CHAPTER LVI.

VER. 1. **Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment.**—*Privilege and responsibility*:—The doctrine of the passage is simply this, that they who enjoy extraordinary privileges, or expect extraordinary favours, are under corresponding obligations to do the will of God; and, moreover, that the nearer the manifestation of God's mercy, whether in time or eternity, the louder the call to righteousness of life. These truths are of no restricted application, but may be applied wherever the relation of a Church or chosen people can be recognized. (*F. A. Alexander.*) *God's mercy and man's duty*:—When God is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet Him in a way of duty. (*M. Henry.*) *Reformation the precursor of regeneration*:—God does not demand of a man, when He sends to him the gracious announcement of the Gospel, that he should change his heart, in order to his having a share in His proffered mercy. He does not say to him, You are now a disloyal subject, and before you can have an interest in the blood of My Son, I require you to become loyal. But He does require that he should set himself to the giving up the overt acts of disloyalty. He sends the tidings of a free pardon to His alienated subjects, but He bids them, as it were, get ready for its reception. "Keep ye judgment, and do justice," etc. The manner in which the doctrines of Scripture are oftentimes propounded has a distinct tendency to repress men's energies, or to give them an altogether wrong direction. The Bible addresses itself unreservedly to sinners, as though they had a moral power of action, for which they were, in the largest sense, accountable, and through which they might make some progress towards deliverance. Hence, it calls on the wicked to forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to turn unto the Lord. It bids them cease to do evil, and learn to do well; it clearly demands a preparatory reformation, and such an attention to the conduct as shall, in some sense, make way for the free pardon of the Gospel. I. SHOW WHAT LIES WITHIN THE POWER OF THE UNCONVERTED; AND WHAT, THEREFORE, THEY ARE BOUND TO DO IF THEY HOPE FOR CONVERSION. We apply this direction to the case of every individual, whatever his station in society; and we consider it as requiring of him a more diligent attention to the duties of that station, as preliminary to his obtaining a single share in the mercies of redemption. If he be living in any known sin, let him renounce it. God's Spirit, so to speak, is scared away by his intemperance, his lust, his uncontrolled tempers, and if he would hope for visitation from this Spirit, let him strive to sweep the chamber, and to garnish it for its reception. II. THE PERFECT HARMONY OF THESE STATEMENTS WITH THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE. We are accustomed to preach to you the insufficiency of works, in helping forward that justification which

is purely of faith; and now we seem to teach the vast importance of works, and those, too, works wrought by mere human strength, as distinctly instrumental to human salvation. 1. The throwing of a man upon certain resources which we hold him to possess, is not representing him as able to advance one step without God. It is God's own appointment that we should use the strength which we have, before more is imparted; and since we only teach submission to this appointment, there can be nothing of interference with the freeness of grace. 2. Our representation of the duties of the unconverted, if they desire conversion, must be correct, inasmuch as it is formed altogether on a Scriptural model. We refer you to the preaching of John the Baptist, as furnishing this model. 3. There is a difficult passage in the history of our Lord's ministrations, which can only be explained on the supposed truth of what we have advanced. When the young man came to Jesus, and demanded what good thing he must do that he might have eternal life, the Saviour replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." 4. We admit that, if a man reform his life under the idea that the reform is meritorious, he may possibly be no nearer conversion; but if he attempt to reform, simply as a preliminary, he shall, surely, be thereby brought unto greater fitness for the reception of grace; and yet the grace when it comes shall have lost none of its characteristics, but still be grace the very freest and the most undeserved. 5. Again, salvation is a thing of faith, not of works. The very desire after conversion pre-supposes faith. If a man do not believe in the coming wrath, he can have no wish for a change that is to secure him against the outbreak of that wrath; and in exhorting him unto an immediate fighting against sin, we exhort him to bring his faith into practice. 6. The individual who goes out into the arena of life and makes an effort in his own strength to overthrow evil, will be a hundredfold better taught the moral decrepitude of man, by the little progress that he makes, or the defeat that he sustains, than another who sits down in his closet and seeks to ascertain his native insufficiency by throwing his power into a balance, or computing it by a process of mathematical calculation. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 2. **Blessed is the man that doeth this.**—*The blessedness of right-doing:*—"Blessed is the man that doeth this." It must be so, for in doing judgment and justice he in some measure resembles the blessed God, who exerciseth judgment and righteousness in the earth, and delighteth in these things. (*R. Macculloch.*) 1. *Comprehensive righteousness:*—The duties of the first table are typified by the observance of the Sabbath; those of the second table are signified in the comprehensive expression, "That keepeth his hand that it do no evil." (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Sabbath-keeping:*—A great variety of reasons have been given for the special mention of the Sabbath here. The true explanation is afforded by a reference to the primary and secondary ends of the Sabbatical institution, and the belief involved in its observance. 1. It implied a recognition of Jehovah as the omnipotent Creator of the universe (Ex. xx. 11, xxxi. 17). 2. As the Sanctifier of His people, not in the technical or theological sense, but as denoting Him by whom they had been set apart as a peculiar people (Ex. xxxi. 13; Ezek. xx. 12). 3. As the Saviour of this chosen people from the bondage of Egypt (Deut. v. 15). Of these great truths the Sabbath was a weekly remembrancer, and its observance by the people a perpetual recognition and profession, besides the practical advantages accruing to the maintenance of a religious spirit by a weekly recurrence of a day of rest. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Sabbath-keeping:*—I. THE DUTY REQUIRED. To keep the Sabbath, to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, or a treasure we are entrusted with; keep it holy, keep it safe, keep it with care and caution, keep from polluting it; allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest nor omit the holy work of that day. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WE HAVE TO DO THIS DUTY. Blessed is he that doeth it. The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience and business of Sabbath sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty (1 Tim. ii. 2). (*M. Henry.*) *Sabbath-keeping and justice:*—We are not just if we rob God of His time. (*Ibid.*) *Resoluteness in Sabbath observance:*—Those that would keep the Sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution; must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for Sabbath time is precious; but it is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; therefore we must lay hold on it, and keep our hold; must do it, and persevere in it. (*Ibid.*) *The utility of the Sabbath:*—As the Sabbath was instituted while man was yet within the precincts of Paradise, and unseduced by the wiles of the devil, we are warranted to conclude that a day of holy rest was

useful and necessary to him, even in a state of innocence; and if it was of use and advantage to him then, how much more must it be now! Man is now become so sinful, so earthly, so forgetful of God, so careless of his highest interests, that were it not for the solemnities of the Sabbath, he would speedily lose all sense of religion, and utterly neglect the salvation of his soul. (*D. Rees.*) *An unpolluted Sabbath:*—The text gives us to understand that in order to keep the Sabbath from polluting it, we must keep our hands from doing any evil. Nor can we suppose that the day is to be sanctified merely by acts of negative holiness, but also by acts of positive goodness. (*Ibid.*) *Sabbaths and week-days:*—"That keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." The best evidence of our having kept the Sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. (*M. Henry.*) *The blessedness of keeping God's holy day:*—What are we to understand by "polluting" the Lord's day? 1. This holy time is certainly thus abused when it is spent in mere idleness. 2. When it is devoted to worldly amusement. 3. By all labour which may not fairly come under the description of work of necessity and mercy. (*J. N. Norton.*) *Sabbath observance:*—A little boy was on a visit to his uncle, and when the morning of the Lord's Day came, the uncle said, "Come, my man, you and I will go out and fish awhile!" "Uncle," answered the boy, very gravely and somewhat puzzled, "does God require us to fish here on Sunday? At our house He doesn't allow us to do it." The fishing excursion was given up, and good came of the child's pointed sermon. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 3–5. **Neither let the son of the stranger.**—"*The son of the stranger*" means simply the individual foreigner (R.V., "the stranger"), not one whose father was a foreigner. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) The non-Israelite. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Consolation for proselytes:*—The case supposed is that if a foreigner who has "joined himself to the Lord," *i. e.* has become a proselyte by accepting the symbols of Jewish nationality (circumcision, etc.), but now has reason to fear that his qualifications will be disallowed. It is likely that the immediate cause of apprehension was some manifestation of an exclusive and intolerant spirit amongst the leaders of the New Jerusalem. Against this spirit (if it existed) the prophet's words enter a strong protest. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Unbelief* many times suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God Himself hath said; things which He hath expressly guarded against. (*M. Henry.*) **The eunuch.**—*Eunuchs:*—We must understand those of Israelitish descent. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The eunuch "a dry tree":*—The eunuch being "a dry tree" feels that having no children he will have no permanent place or name in the kingdom. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*)

Vers. 4–7. **For thus saith the Lord.**—*Characteristics and privileges of God's people:*—The pride of ancestry, and boast of ceremonial exclusiveness and glorying in the flesh, the Lord, by His prophet, looking forward to Gospel days, now abolishes, and marks out the true distinctions of His people to be that which is moral and spiritual, to the exclusion of all bodily defects or natural peculiarities. Observe—I. THE MARKS AND DISTINCTIONS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. Keeping the Sabbath. 2. Choosing the things that please Him. 3. Taking hold of His covenant. 4. Being joined to Him to serve Him. 5. Loving His name. 6. Serving Him. II. THE GRACIOUS AND GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. Incorporation with His Church. 2. Joy in the sanctuary. 3. Acceptance of their spiritual worship. (*J. Gemmel, M.A.*) **And take hold of My covenant.**—*Taking hold of God's covenant:*—By a lively faith, although the devil rap her on the fingers for so doing. (*J. Trapp.*) *Holding fast by God's covenant* (R.V.):—"Hold fast" (as ver. 2). By holding fast My covenant is meant adhering to his compact with Me, which includes obedience to the precepts and faith in the promises. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Taking hold of God's covenant:*—It was generally supposed by the Jews that no one, except the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, could be in covenant relationship with God. Paul, however, says, in writing to the Romans, "But Esaias is very bold;" and he is so in this instance. He declares that men may take hold of the covenant of God though, heretofore, they appeared to be shut out from its privileges. I. WHAT IS THIS COVENANT? It has been well said, "He who understands the covenants holds the key of all theology." There was, first of all, a covenant made with our father, Adam;—not, perhaps, in set terms, but virtually,—that, if he should do the will of God, he should live. But, alas! our great covenant head

Adam the first, could not keep that covenant. I should think that none of us want to take hold of that covenant, for we are all sufferers by it already. There is a second covenant, made with the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; and by that covenant, it was provided that He should Himself perfectly keep the law, and that He should suffer the penalty due from His people for their breaches of the law; and that, if He did both these things, then all those who were represented in Him should live for ever. 1. The new covenant is a covenant of pure grace. 2. It is a "covenant ordered in all things and sure." 3. The ensign of this covenant is faith. II. HOW CAN WE LAY HOLD OF IT? 1. I must loose my hold of the old covenant. 2. The main plan is by believing in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of thy soul. 3. But I have known those laying hold on the covenant begin in different ways. Some have laid hold upon it by a confession of sin; and the Lord has said, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." 4. Another way of laying hold of it is, by seeking the Lord in prayer. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." 5. When you have once accepted Christ, I like you to get a hold of the covenant in all sorts of ways. We have only two hands, but there are some creatures that have a great many hands, or feelers, or suckers; and when they want to be quite safe, they seize hold with all their hands. Christ has made a covenant with His Church, and I like to lay hold of that covenant by uniting with His people. It will be a great help to you to lay hold of the covenant by availing yourself of all Church privileges. The right thing for every sinner to say is just this, "The covenant of grace exactly suits my case. Jesus Christ has come to save the guilty and the needy; that is the sort of person I am, so I will lay hold of His covenant. I have got a grip of it, and there I hang. If His Gospel be true, I am a saved man." III. WHAT IS THERE TO LAY HOLD OF? 1. An atonement. 2. There is another place where you can lay hold of the covenant, and that is, the mercy-seat. Go and bow before God in prayer, Christ being your Intercessor, plead with God for mercy, through His atoning blood, and then say, "I will never leave off praying till I get the blessing." 3. It is also a grand thing to lay hold of a promise in God's Word. 4. There is another thing which you should lay hold of, and that is, an invitation. IV. WHY SHOULD I NOT LAY HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT? 1. One reason for doing so is this. Others, who are like yourself, have done so. 2. Out of all who have ever come to Christ, there has never been one rejected. 3. You are the very sort of character that is bidden to come. "This man receiveth sinners." 4. There is nothing else for you to hold to. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 5. **Even unto them will I give.**—*God gives, but not indiscriminately:*—Again and again the Lord says "will I give," and "I will give." He is always giving; He lives to give. God so loved the world that He gave; His hands are outstretched in continual dispensation of blessing. Observe here the usual condition upon which great honours are promised. This is not an indiscriminate rain of benediction, clouds emptying themselves without regard to character; it is not a confusion of man with man; but there is a principle of discrimination, election, selection, or choice running through the whole action. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **A place and a name.**—"*A place*":—The noun offers several meanings suitable in this passage. It signifies a "monument" or "memorial," as a lofty indicator or pointer (Ezek. xxi. 24), as a finger-post pointing to the person for whom it has been erected (2 Sam. xviii. 18; 1 Sam. xv. 12); in this sense, however, the word would declare more than the promise permits one to expect. The Semitic term also signifies a place (Num. ii. 17; Deut. xxiii. 12; Jer. vi. 3), and a "share" or portion (2 Sam. xix. 43). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *God's promise to pious eunuchs:*—There seems no reason to doubt that the promise is to be understood literally. An illustration of what is meant is found in 2 Sam. xviii. 18, where we read that Absalom, in the prospect of dying childless, erected the pillar to his own memory which was known as "Absalom's hand" (also 1 Sam. xv. 12, R.V. marg.). The case of those here spoken of is precisely similar. They have "no son to keep their name in remembrance," but their memory shall be perpetuated by a monument erected within the temple walls; and such a memorial, testifying to the esteem of the whole community, is "better" (and more enduring) "than sons and daughters." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Better than sons and daughters* may either mean better than the comfort immediately derived from children (as in Ruth iv. 15), or, better than the perpetuation of the name by

hereditary succession. Most interpreters prefer the latter sense, but both may be included. A beautiful coincidence and partial fulfilment of the promise is pointed out by J. D. Michaelis, in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, whose conversion is recorded in Acts viii. 7, and whose memory is far more honoured in the Church than it could have been by a long line of illustrious descendants. (*J. A. Alexander.*) **I will give them an everlasting name.**—*Names:*—Our greatest poet asks, "What's in a name?" but whoever reads his Bible carefully will see that the Jews attached very great importance to names. Thus we often find in the Bible that the name of a person is used when the person himself is meant, as for example, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;—we will call upon the name of the Lord;—let their name be blotted out that they may be no more a nation." Jewish parents never gave their children a name for the sake of its sound, but because it expressed some peculiarity in the child, or some circumstance connected with its birth, or some wish for its future career. God Himself set this example when He named the first man Adam—"red earth"—to commemorate the fact that dust he was, and unto dust he should return. *The noblest name:*—1. Every Christian parent who now takes a child to the font of baptism should try and choose a name with some good meaning in it, and should endeavour to bring up the child to live a life worthy of its name, even as the parents of Timothy gave him a name which means "one who fears God," and early taught him in the Holy Scriptures that he might learn what God would have him to do. 2. No matter what name our parents may have given us, all who are baptized have the very best of names. It is the name of Christ, the name of "Christian." (1) It is the oldest name, older than all the Howards or Sydneys of England, older than Saxon or Norman, or Jew, or Greek, or Roman. The name of Christ, which we bear, is from everlasting. (2) It is the noblest name; most great families derive their name from some famous act of their founder, some great victory, or some wide estate; our name is better than all, for we are named after the greatest Conqueror, one who triumphed at the price of His own blood, one who conquered Death and Satan, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. We are a royal family, for we bear the name of the King of kings, a better name than that of Cæsar, or Pharaoh, or Tudor, or Stuart: all old families have a crest and a coat of arms, but our arms are the best, and they are the Cross. (3) It is an everlasting name; some of the grandest old names in England have died out, many of the proudest family names are only to be seen on a tomb, but the name of our family will never be extinct, it becomes better known every year, and will be spread far and wide till "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea." What, then, is required of us who bear such a name? The son of a good father would not willingly disgrace the name which has been made famous, so we must remember whose name we bear. (*J. W. Buxton.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Also the sons of the stranger.**—*Gentiles enjoying God's favour:*—This is a clear prophecy of the call of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ. Let us attend to this description of those who are objects of the Divine favour, and entitled to the privileges of His house. 1. They join themselves to the Lord. This supposes a former distance and alienation from Him. But that is removed by humble repentance and returning to the Lord. It includes, renouncing all their idols; forsaking all their sin, everything contrary to the nature and will of God: a deliberate choice of Him, as their portion and felicity; and of His people, as their friends and associates. 2. The design of their thus joining themselves unto the Lord is to serve Him. This is further expressed in the phrase, to be His servants; not only to serve Him occasionally, or for a while, but perpetually; to adhere to Him and His ways, from a deep conviction that nothing can be more reasonable, important, and advantageous than to hear what He saith, and to do it. 3. It is added, and to love the name of the Lord. They take delight in His service; they perform it not from fear and a servile dread, but from a sincere and strong affection. They love His name; that is, they love him, His worship and His ways, and pursue His work with delight. It is opposed to narrow, selfish, mercenary views, which render the service less acceptable and comfortable. They esteem it their meat and drink to do His will. 4. Another thing expected from God's people is, that they keep His Sabbath from polluting it. This is an essential character, a distinguishing mark, of good men. 5. God's people take hold of His covenant. They enter into serious, deliberate, solemn engagements to observe and keep His laws, in order to obtain the blessings which He hath promised; and which, in so doing, they cheerfully expect. They take hold of it; which implies a hearty consent to God's terms,

a cheerful approbation and acceptance of them and delight in them. It likewise implies a steady resolution. They take hold of it, as those who are determined not to let it go. (*J. Orton.*) *The rewards of God's servants:*—The text—I. HOLDS OUT UNIVERSAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO MAN. 1. By the transfer of the priesthood from Aaron to Christ. 2. By the change of sacrifice. From the blood of bulls and of goats to the precious blood of the Son of God. 3. By the removal of place. From Jerusalem to the temple of the universe. 4. By a change of worship. From ritual to spiritual. What an encouraging prospect! (Eph. ii. 11-22.) II. INCULCATES UNIVERSAL PIETY. Piety in heart and practice. The duties enumerated may be divided into three classes. 1. Those which relate to Christ, expressed by taking hold of His covenant—accepting—agreeing to it. 2. Those which relate to God as the Governor of the world. (1) His servants. (2) Walk by His laws. (3) Keep His Sabbaths. 3. Those which relate to the Church. III. PROMISES UNIVERSAL HAPPINESS. 1. Access to heaven. "I will bring them to My holy mountain." 2. Joyfulness in His service. "I will make them joyful in My house of prayer." 3. The Divine acceptance of their religious engagements. "Their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar." (*R. Watson.*)

Ver. 7. **Even them will I bring to My holy mountain.**—*The house of prayer:*—If we accept the interpretation that the second Isaiah has given us the prophecies of the restoration, we may regard this chapter as a description of Israel after the return from the Chaldean captivity, and, further, the condition of worship in the reign of the Messiah. We place before you the whole matter as a plea for God's house in the present day. I. THE LOCATION OF WORSHIP. "Mine house." With God everywhere, what need is there of setting apart any particular spot for worship? While all creation is God's magnificent temple, why should we consecrate any particular place or building for the purpose of worship? We have a promise in the Book itself that a period will dawn when there shall be no need for exhortation or public help (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34). But we must suppose conditions of thought, and degrees of piety, which do not exist, in order to worship God in the general terms implied in these statements. We infer from the history of public worship that God has adapted its forms to the state of mankind in the various periods of the past. To-day worship must be conducted with a view to the position of the religious thought which prevails. 1. The first essential element of worship is concentration. The circumstantial in religion must be framed to centre thought upon God in His nearness to man. The patriarch's altar, the tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon did this. In the teaching of Christ we meet with an expansion of the geography of worship. The temples on Moriah and Gerizim were doomed, both by the force of circumstances and the Incarnation. God in Christ became the consummation of the central idea of God. But Christ was human as well as Divine. We find Him both in the synagogue and the temple. He drew His disciples together, sometimes into a house, other times on the mountain slopes, or in secluded spots, for instruction and fellowship. He introduced a simplicity into worship which indicated a more spiritual thought than that which obtained when gorgeous ritualism formed its environment. The time had arrived when He would introduce a method by which we would worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." But never has Jesus Christ hinted at the probability that such a worship would consist of abstract thought, universal observation, or individual reflection, apart from the offices of time and space. When God and man meet they must meet somewhere. Although the necessity for a restricted spot had passed away, and the whole earth became a consecrated temple, when the eternal Son chose it as His imperial palace, yet the limitations of the spiritual man, while dwelling in a tabernacle of clay, suggest the setting apart of places for worship. In an age when life is at a higher pressure than ever it has been, and consequently, an age when our thoughts are agitated, scattered, embittered, and inflamed, of what incalculable value must the house of prayer be. 2. Our next point is association. We have been told that there is such a thing as abstract thought, but where is abstract life? How far can one go on the path of life without the aid of others? It seems absurd that people should assume so much piety as not to require any association or assistance. If the Hall of Science is needed, why not the Hall of Prayer? 3. Our third plea for the house of prayer is memorial. Every place of worship in England is a witness to the Being of God, and to His providence and salvation. "Mine house" is a significant designation, showing His acceptance of the gift. It is the language of love in response to the gift of love. II. THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP. "House of prayer." Prayer is a comprehensive term, having devotion as its

central idea. There would have been an appropriateness in calling it the house of praise, for from no other house has so much and so grand music ascended to heaven. It might have been called the house of preaching, because the word is gone forth out of Zion to the ends of the earth. But why did God name it the house of prayer? Under the old dispensation, sacrifice occupied the most prominent place in the services, but even then its name was the house of prayer. Reverence for God is the first step of the ladder. Waiting upon God is the next step. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) **And make them joyful in My house of prayer.**—*My house of prayer:*—Jesus Christ, when in a sublime act of indignation He drove out the desecrators of the temple, applied the words to the outer courts of that noble material building. But He Himself has taught us not to limit the phrase, but to give it the widest possible meaning. It is not for us to speak of God's house of prayer as if it were restricted to any one locality, or as if it described any particular kind of structure. God's house of prayer may be found anywhere, everywhere. Wherever the human heart reaches out with holy longing towards the Divine Father, and craves the blessing of His presence; wherever He unveils the glory of His truth and the beauty of His love, responding to the eager desires of His pleading children, there is His house of prayer. It may be grand in form, or poor and mean; there may be no material structure at all, but the solemn temple of Nature itself, yet shall it be consecrated for worship by the prayers which ascend to God. Yet, we still find it necessary to establish and set apart places of worship, and because we frequent them for this holiest of purposes, we speak of each of them as a house of prayer. As it is necessary that we should consecrate one day out of the week for the special purposes of religion, so we find it desirable to meet at some regularly appointed spot to engage with our fellows in acts of devotion. And the reasonableness becomes apparent. We want such places for convenience' sake. If social religion is to have any existence at all, if the communion of the saints is to be a reality, if there are to be united praise and prayer and instruction in Divine truth, then men and women must know where they are to gather for these purposes. Further, it is not merely a matter of convenience; it is helpful to our spiritual and daily life. We want as places of worship some which are unassociated with our secular affairs—places which seem to stand away from the cares and worries and strivings of our common life—where we can give our minds and hearts a season of rest—an opportunity of calmly, and without distraction, contemplating and estimating the character and meaning, the worth or worthlessness of the work we are doing in the world. Of course this might be done at home, in the shop, in the office, in the chamber, but not so effectually, not so thoroughly, as in the quiet place specially devoted to religious worship. There, seeming to stand at a distance from worldly avocations, we judge them and our relation to them more impartially and honestly. (*W. Braden.*) *Joyfulness in worship:*—I. THERE SHOULD BE A NATURAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE TWO. I reach this conclusion by remembering two things. 1. That we, as human beings, have in us the capacity for joy. 2. That the religion we profess, when rightly understood, is a joy-producing religion. II. WORSHIP IS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR NOBLEST RELIGIOUS FEELINGS IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. It is not a mere ceremonial act, an observance of prescribed ritual on certain days and in appointed places. It is the going forth of the man towards God. Therefore, our joy must utter itself, ought to utter itself, when we enter into the courts of His house. I believe that the Divine Father has no sympathy with those who would turn His house of prayer into a place for gloomy, and unhappy thoughts, and who would exclude from His service everything pleasant and beautiful. They misunderstand and libel Him by their desire for dreariness. If God has taught us anything with distinctness in the outer world of nature it is that He loves all that is pleasant and sweet and joyous. Is there not something joy-exciting in the very thought and act of worship? This has been the thought of most peoples. 1. The Greeks who worshipped gods of uncertain passions and dispositions, nevertheless seem to have made the worship a season of joy—"they wreathed themselves with flowers, they anointed themselves with sweet perfumes, they surrounded their temples with every attraction, they invoked every pleasure they could think of, they sought to make the hour of their worship a charming and beautiful hour." Their joy in this respect was of a sensuous character, more animal than spiritual, and we do not need to imitate them; but even the heathen had the idea of indulging in gladness in the presence of their gods. 2. The same emotion was constantly expressed by the Hebrews. We often regard the religion of the Jews as harsh, stern, dreary, a constant pressure upon the minds and souls of the people. Never was there a greater mistake, as a careful study of their numerous festivals and

rites would prove. Remember the worship-literature of the Jews, that magnificent collection of psalms which is one of the most precious treasures handed down to us from the past. It is full of jubilance. Expressions of personal sorrow there are in abundance; but even they are turned into subjects of song. 3. If it was possible for Jews to enjoy worship, if it was natural for them to give expression to gladness of heart when coming into the Divine presence, is there not more abundant reason why we, as Christians, possessing a fuller and purer and more intimate revelation of God, should rejoice before Him? III. FOR THOSE WHO SEEK TO WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH THIS JOY IS ASSURED BY THE PROMISE, "I will make them joyful in My house of prayer." Our anticipation of the worship of God's house, and the manner in which we present ourselves to Him, should be gladsome. Why? Because we go expecting to meet God, and receive the gracious fulfilment of the promise. Our hope of blessing to come already fills us with delight. When we have entered into the engagements of Divine worship, if we have been in the right spirit of desire, God has drawn near us and fulfilled our largest hopes. He has apparently devised the means by which this shall be brought about through the three exercises of our worship—our praise, our prayer, and our study of His truth. These seem in themselves calculated, ordained, consecrated for the very object of exciting our joy. 1. Think of the very act of praise. What does it mean? That we are recalling to mind the Divine mercy, and tenderness, and compassion, and love which have come into our life. We praise God for what He is; for what His works reveal Him to be; for what He has done for us; and you cannot do that without some inspiration of gladness filling your soul. Praise itself springs from and excites to joy. 2. The same glorious result is wrought by means of prayer. That man who has never yet held conscious communion with his God in prayer, has never yet experienced one of the noblest and purest joys of which his nature is capable. 3. And shall I add the same of the other exercise—the study of His truth? As the man who, digging for gold, is flushed with delight when his toil is rewarded by some rich nugget; as the student of Nature, when investigating her secrets, is gladdened as he perceives the traces of some new law, or a possible combination of well-known causes that will produce a new result, so Christians know the thrill of satisfaction that springs from a fresh realization of the meaning of Divine truth. God stands revealed in clearer light, and all the wonders of His work for man through the history of the world, and especially in the person of Christ, are understood and loved as they were never understood or loved before. These awakenings to joy are always taking place in God's house. One comes there perplexed concerning his path of duty, and to him there is uttered some wise precept, which makes the way clear once more. Another is troubled concerning the terrible mystery of life, its inequalities and sorrows; but to him is revealed the Fatherhood of God, and that means perfect love and assurance of blessedness for man as the ultimate issue of all things. Does not that oppressed soul rejoice? And how many, conscious of unforgiven sin, venture into the holy place. And they see a vision of Calvary with its sacred Victim; the heavens seem to open for them, and they behold the ascended Christ, the Mediator. Who shall measure the joy of these? (*Ibid.*) **Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.**—*God's house:*—The thing here spoken of is God's house, described—I. BY ITS APPROPRIATION UNTO HIM. "My house." II. BY ITS EXTENT OF RECEIPT IN RESPECT OF OTHERS. "For all people." III. BY THE EMPLOYMENT OF ITS INHABITANTS. "It shall be called a house of prayer." (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *The Church of Christ:*—I. CHRIST'S CHURCH OF SAINTS, OF BELIEVERS, IS GOD'S HOUSE. II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNDER THE GOSPEL IS TO BE GATHERED OUT OF ALL NATIONS. III. THERE ARE ESTABLISHED ORDINANCES, AND APPOINTED WORSHIP FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNDER THE GOSPEL. (*Ibid.*) *Public worship:*—I shall endeavour to make it appear that the best homage which we can pay to God is that which is most public. I. THIS IS THE WAY OF GIVING THE GREATEST HONOUR TO GOD. When a multitude of people meet together to worship the Almighty, and to set forth His praises, it makes some little figure of heaven; it raises our minds to more magnificent conceptions of God, and more fully represents Him to us as the Governor of the world whereas, if we look upon Him as only intending our private interest, as busied only to serve our present wants, we may be thought to conceive of Him rather as an idol than as that infinite Being whose care and providence are extended to the concerns of the whole creation. To worship God truly is to make Him known to be the Lord of the universe, the common Parent, Preserver, and Benefactor of all mankind; and therefore public assemblies are the best signification of His glorious perfections and

vast dominion. They who cannot use their minds to any abstracted ways of thinking, may be wonderfully confirmed and heightened in their acknowledgments and thoughts of a Deity, when they see how the learned and the rich and the honourable, and the greatest persons upon the earth, do bow and kneel before their Maker, and humble themselves in the dust of the sanctuary to witness their profound veneration of an infinite wisdom, power and goodness. II. THE NATURE OF RELIGION IS SUCH THAT IT ESPECIALLY REQUIRES A PUBLIC EXERCISE. Christians are not to look upon themselves as single persons, of distinct and separate interests; but as members of the same mystical Body, as parts of the same spiritual Society; that they are redeemed as a Church, and are to glorify God as a Church; that their chief blessings are those they enjoy in common. III. THERE IS NOTHING THAT SO MUCH PROMOTES A SPIRIT OF UNIVERSAL CHARITY AS A DUE ESTEEM AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. What can bring us to a greater concern for one another, and more unite our affections, than a frequent meeting at the same place of worship, and joining together in the same duties of religion? IV. FREQUENTING PUBLIC WORSHIP, WITH THAT PREPARATION AND WITH THOSE DISPOSITIONS WHICH IT REQUIRES, IS THE BEST WAY WHEREBY WE MAY ATTAIN TO SOLID PIETY. We have many times a Divine truth more strongly imprinted on our minds, or more fully confirmed unto us, when our hearts are tender and devout, than when our heads are exercised in the deepest thinking. It is further observable, that men are generally much more subject to impressions and affections when they are assembled than when they are alone. (*T. Manningham, D.D.*) *God's house the house of prayer for all people:*—1. In order to the realization of the glorious scene in which the world shall finally be seen prostrate before God in prayer, the first and earliest step necessary was the revelation of the Divine existence; "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is." "How shall they call upon Him of whom they have not heard?" 2. But does He take an interest in the affairs of the world? If not, prayer to Him is useless. In answer to this inquiry Sinai rises to view. God is there, legislating for sinful man. Listen to His law as He proclaims it, and mark how much of it relates directly to your welfare. Apart from the Gospel, nothing in the universe displays the Divine benevolence so much as the giving of the law. 3. But is the great God accessible? That He takes a benevolent interest in human affairs is evident. If, however, the terrors of Sinai are not laid aside—if that is a specimen of His usual state—who can venture to approach Him? The temple on Sion is an answer to the inquiry. "Let the people build Me a sanctuary," saith God, "that I may dwell among them." This was another stage, a vast advance in the Divine condescension. To show His own sense of its importance, He supplied the model, and selected the spot, and superintended the erection of the building. When completed, the Majesty of Heaven came down and visibly took possession. When it was rumoured abroad that the Lord of Heaven had a house upon earth, did not the guilty race come to cast themselves at His feet and sue for mercy? 4. But, it might have been asked in the next place, "Will He pardon? Accessible He may be, but is He propitious?" Approach and read the inscription over its gates, "The house of prayer." Then there is hope for the penitent. Let us enter and ascertain. On crossing the threshold and looking around, we find that it is distributed into three parts. We find ourselves at first in the court of the temple; here the principal objects are a great altar of sacrifice, and a laver in which the sacrifices are washed. "What mean that cleansing water, and that bleeding lamb?" They say, as plainly as they can, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," and that the victim whose blood is shed must be spotless. We advance, and find ourselves in the second part, the holy place. Here the principal objects are a golden candlestick, a table of shewbread, and an altar of incense; and what mean these objects? They denote that the sacrifice is accepted, that God is propitiated, that He is waiting to illuminate and anoint His worshippers with His Spirit, to feast their souls on living bread, and to accept their praises as grateful incense. "But what means that mysterious veil which conceals the third part of the temple, the holiest of all?" It denotes that sinful man can fully approach a holy God only through a Divine Mediator, and that that Mediator is not yet come. But we know what is within. There stands the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat resting upon it, denoting mercy resting on faithfulness; and there are the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, intimating the reverence with which even mercy itself should be sought, and the profound mystery which it involves. "But what means that mass of dazzling light above?" It is the symbol of the Divine presence. "And why dwells He there?" That men may come and fall down before Him, and that He may commune with them from

off the mercy-seat. He makes it His rest, that men may come to Him, and make it their rest. Numbers through successive ages availed themselves of His grace. 5. But everything there—gracious as it was, calculated as it was to bring all people in humble prostration before God—existed only in type and promise. It may be asked, therefore, in the next place, "Have those types been accomplished?" The fulness of time arrives, and, behold, God sending forth His Son! Calvary appears; there, as our Substitute; He is making an infinite compensation for our demerit. The day of Pentecost arrives—behold in its scenes a proof that our Advocate has entered on His office of intercession above, and that His sacrificial plea prevails. Is it then still asked if the ancient promises have been fulfilled? Let the tears of the sinner, the joy of the saint, the success of the Gospel in every subsequent age, bear witness. 6. But, again, admitting that God is thus accessible and gracious, is He thus accessible and gracious to all? Is the Gospel Church less open and free than the Jewish temple? Its gates are never to be shut, night nor day! Its blessings are to be offered without money and without price. "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." "O Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come." 7. And is there ground to conclude that this sublime result shall be realized? "I have sworn by Myself, the word hath gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." Conclusion—(1) To this point everything in the mediatorial government of Christ is tending with the directness and force of a law. To this end, therefore, every event in His Church, every movement of His people, should be intentionally subordinated. (2) The question will be entertained, then, by every Christian mind, How may this sacred place be made most effectually to subserve this great end? By making it literally a house of prayer. The very presence of a church or chapel is to be viewed as a perpetual protest against all prayerlessness and irreligion. (3) Here everything is to be done with the view of leading to prayer. (4) Here, too, the salvation of the world, and whatever may be instrumentally necessary to that salvation, should be made the subject of prayer. (*J. Harris, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith.**—*An important Divine declaration:*—"Declaration of the Lord, Jehovah: gathering the outcasts of Israel, I will further gather beyond it to its gathered ones." That ver. 8 declares something of importance, and, because it might possibly seem strange, something to be solemnly confirmed, is shown by the expression, which is in itself solemn, and is here placed at the head of the declaration. So far is it from being the case that Gentiles who love Jehovah will be excluded from the congregation, that it is rather the design of Jehovah to gather some from among the Gentiles and add them to the gathered diaspora of Israel. The double name of God likewise points to something important. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Others to be gathered:*—God's work now is that of gathering. There was a time when it was scattering. Man built the tower of Babel, which was intended to be the centre of unity, the armoury of power, and the seat of dominion, whence some mighty Nimrod might sway his sceptre over all the human race: but the Lord would not have it so. Infinite wisdom baffled finite ambition. Now the Lord is gathering together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad. Jesus hath made both Jew and Gentile one, breaking down every wall of partition. This ingathering process is going on every day by the testimony of the Word, and it is to be continued until the end of time. I. THE INSTANCES MENTIONED: instances of gathering by the hand of the Lord, who is described as "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel." Outcasts have been gathered, and this is the token that others shall be gathered. I suppose Isaiah first alludes to the banished who had been carried away captive to Babylon and to all parts of the East, but who were at different times restored to their land. But I prefer to use the text in reference to our Divine Lord, seeing that to Him shall the gathering of the people be. 1. When He was here below He gathered the outcasts of Israel by His ministry. 2. He gathered them by forgiving their sins. This brought them nearer still, and held them there. 3. Our Lord gathered many by graciously helping them. He met with some whose great trial was sore affliction, temptation and sorrow. Magdalene is a chief instance. 4. He gathered them, also, so as to enrol them under His banner. It was a marvellous moment for Levi, when he sat at the receipt of custom, when Jesus called him. You will, perhaps, think that my Master's gathering power lay in His being here Himself. It is true there was a matchless charm about Him, and yet to let us know that we must know Him no longer

after the flesh, there was not even in the charms of Christ's most blessed Person enough of power to prevent the people crying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." His power is spiritual, the power of His own Spirit, and therefore it is exercised now though His bodily presence is removed. II. THE PROMISE UTTERED. "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith," etc. 1. This promise is very wide. It means in the first place that the Gentiles should be brought to know the Lord. It was a bright day when first of all the centurion of Cæsarea sent men to Joppa, and received a visit from Peter, and was baptized of him. Fair also was the day when the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized of Philip. How strange it must have seemed at first to the apostles, who were all Jews, and very strongly Jewish too, especially Peter, to see the Gentiles gathered. One marvels that Paul was not more narrow in heart, considering his birth and education, but he had vanquished his old notions, and gloried in being the apostle of the Gentiles. It is delightful to think of men of divers colours coming to Christ, and in the best possible manner proving the unity of our race. What would the twelve have thought if they could have foreseen that the Gospel which they preached would bind in one brotherhood all races of men? 2. The promise is continuous. "Yet will I gather others." That was true when Isaiah stated it; it would have been true if Peter had quoted it on the morning of Pentecost. It was quite true when Carey acted upon it, and started on what men thought his mad enterprise, to go as a consecrated cobbler to convert the learned Brahmins of India. It is quite as true now. If the promise had been written this morning and the ink were not yet dry it would be no more true than it is now:—"Yet will I gather others to Him." 3. The promise is most graciously encouraging, because it evidently applies very pointedly to outcasts. Has there strayed into this house of prayer an outcast from society? Hearken thou to this word. But if not an outcast from society, it may be you are an outcast in your own esteem. 4. The promise is absolute. This is the kind of language which only an omnipotent being can use as to men's minds. III. THE FACTS WHICH SUSTAIN OUR FAITH IN THIS PROMISE. 1. The perpetuity of the Gospel. Still is the good news preached among you. 2. The blood of atonement has not lost its power. 3. The Spirit of God is with us still. 4. The glory and majesty of the Gospel, or rather the greatness of the glory of God in the Gospel, demands that many more should be gathered than have as yet been enfolded in the Church. 5. There must be many more souls to be ingathered because of the longings of the saints. They are not satisfied unless they see conversions. The Church needs more conversions. We never prosper as a Church unless we have a fresh stream of young blood running into us. IV. THE CONDUCT CONSISTENT WITH THIS PROMISE. 1. To believe it, and then to pray about it. 2. If you pray, you must work, for prayer without endeavour is hypocrisy. 3. Expect to see others gathered. 4. Those who have not yet been gathered should be encouraged to hope. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 9–12. **All ye beasts of the field, come to devour.**—*The defenceless condition of the community owing to the incompetence of its spiritual leaders:*—1. All the wild beasts of the field and the forest are invited to come and devour the unprotected flock. 2. For its rulers neglect their duty; they are inefficient as dumb dogs; they are slothful, greedy, and sensual. 3. In consequence of their incapacity the righteous perish, none regarding their fate (chap. lvii. 1, 2). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The metaphor of wild beasts:*—The people being represented in the following verses as a flock, their destroyers are naturally represented here as wild beasts. (*J. A. Alexander.*) That a new chastisement at the hands of the heathen is actually contemplated need not be assumed. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The flock: its guardians and its devourers:*—These words (ver. 9) are to be understood as a note of warning, a sound of alarm. It is not that God wishes His flock to be devoured that He thus summons the beasts of prey to gather round the fold; on the contrary, He is concerned for their safety, and warns them of the danger in which they stand. No style of address was better fitted to startle both flock and shepherds from their careless security. God's flock is still surrounded by ravenous beasts. I. THE UNPROTECTED STATE OF THE FLOCK. 1. In the case before us the sheep are shamefully neglected. 2. The opposite course must tend to secure the safety and well-being of the flock. Pray, then, for your minister. II. THE WILD BEASTS THAT THREATEN TO DEVOUR THE FLOCK. Some are open and undisguised; others are wily and insidious. Conclusion: We point you to the Chief Shepherd. (*W. Guthrie, M.A.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **His watchmen are blind.**—*The old Hebrew pulpit a beacon to modern*

preachers (with Jer. viii. 11):—I. THE OLD HEBREW PULPIT AT THIS TIME WAS IGNORANT. The "watchmen" are said to be "blind" and "ignorant." They did not see and "understand" the things that ought to have been clear to their vision and intelligible to their judgment. An ignorant pulpit, though a contradiction in terms, has ever been too prevalent. There may be profound pulpit ignorance where there are the most distinguished scholastic acquirement and literary charms. On the other hand, there may be considerable pulpit intelligence where there is but a very small degree of mere scholastic attainment. Many a noble-souled, Gospel-inspired man, who knew no book but the Bible, no language but his own, and could not speak even that with grammatical propriety, has done the true work of the pulpit. That pulpit is an ignorant pulpit that does not "discern the things of the Spirit"—things that the Spirit of God approves, and the spirit of man requires. I call that an ignorant pulpit which ministers to the speculative in man rather than to the spiritual, to the intellect rather than the heart, and presents a dead creed rather than a living Christ. I call that an ignorant pulpit which ministers to sects rather than to souls, represents Christ as one sent to save a favourite few, rather than as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." I call that an ignorant pulpit that does not practically feel that all Divine truth to man is but infinite love for man speaking through the intellect to the heart. II. THE OLD HEBREW PULPIT AT THIS TIME WAS MARKED BY SLOTHFULNESS. The watchmen are called "dumb dogs that cannot bark." It is because these animals have ever been used by man as sentinels whose bark warns of approaching danger; and because they are only useful as they bark, that they are employed as symbols of indolent preachers. There are men who, when they speak, speak with a drowsy soul, and their words are somnific. Perhaps there are more in these times dumb from expediency than from slothfulness. They echo only the opinions that are current in their Church. They add nothing to the stock of Christian intelligence. III. THE OLD HEBREW PULPIT AT THIS TIME WAS MARKED BY SELFISH GREED. "Yea they are greedy dogs which can never have enough," etc. Such strong language expresses their ravenous selfishness. It would seem that these corrupt prophets cared for no one but themselves. How stands the modern pulpit in this respect? This selfish greed shows itself in other ways besides the striving after "filthy lucre." There is the greed for popularity. IV. THE OLD HEBREW PULPIT AT THIS TIME WAS MARKED BY SUPERFICIALITY. "They have healed the daughter of My people slightly." Dr. Blaney, in his translation, substitutes the word "superficially" for "slightly." Although these words are taken from another book they refer to the same subject, and to the same class of men. The words, however, from Isaiah describe their character, these words describe their work. They did something, but it was partial and ineffective. They did not seek to eradicate the disease, but merely administered temporary palliatives, which, whilst they deadened the pain, fostered the virus of the malady. The idea undoubtedly is, that instead of endeavouring to work into the moral heart of the people profound convictions as to the enormity of their sins, and fulminate in their ears the righteous denunciations of Heaven, they presented considerations of false comfort. This superficial healing of souls is an immense injury. It deludes the patient. It wastes the restorative season. That pulpit is superficial which fails either to generate supreme love to the great God in hearts where it is not, or to strengthen it in hearts where it is. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 12. To-morrow, shall be as this day.—*Faith and presumption:*—The future is very differently contemplated by different individuals. Men of a sanguine temperament gild it with golden visions that are never realized. Such persons meet with many disappointments. It is quite right to expect good in the future, providing we eagerly seize the opportunities and avail ourselves of the advantages of the present. But it is in the field of to-day that we must sow the seed of what we are to reap on the morrow. Men of a directly opposite temperament are constantly foreboding evil. This desponding disposition is itself a very heavy burden to bear. If there be evil in the future, it doubles it by the anticipation, and the anticipation is frequently a heavier burden than is the reality; and if the future brings no such evil, we have been carrying a burden, when in reality there was no burden to bear. How wise are the words of Jesus, "Take no thought for the morrow," etc. Both these dispositions need to be corrected. There is still another class who are morally reckless about the future. This results neither from temperament nor imagination, but from their moral condition: the madness is in their hearts. They were persons of this class who made use of the words contained in our text. These words,

although polluted by the sense and circumstances in which they are here used, express a truth as well as a falsehood. I. THEY MAY BE THE EXPRESSION OF A PERFECTLY RATIONAL FAITH AND REASONABLE SENTIMENT. 1. It is reasonable to expect that nature will be as productive in the future as it has ever been in the past. Why should we fear that seed-time and harvest or summer and winter will fail, or that the soil will be less productive than it has been? Surely if we are to expect any change, it is a change for the better; the sun will shine as brightly as it has done, and the rains will fall as abundantly, and the earth will be more extensively reclaimed and better cultivated. The soil yields a great deal more now than it used to do; and still there remaineth much land to be possessed. 2. This is a reasonable sentiment when used in the light of human progress. The progress made in arts and sciences ought greatly to increase the resources of society. Labour is the wealth of a nation, and therefore the more labour can be made to produce, the wealthier a nation must be. Not only so, but the productions of one country have by these means been brought within easy access of other countries, so that failure in one part is largely compensated for by a more abundant supply in other places. 3. This is also a rational sentiment when we remember the goodness and unchangeableness of God. His goodness to us in the past ought to inspire us with confidence in Him for the future; and this confidence ought to have respect to all the concerns of life. 4. This is a reasonable sentiment when you consider the promises of God and the predictions concerning the future. Is it not said that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose? Let the Gospel be preached to the savage and the uncivilized; if they receive it they will not only sit at the feet of Jesus, but they will also soon become clothed, and begin to cultivate the soil, and the change thus produced on the face of nature will correspond with the change in their moral and spiritual condition. 5. Then there is a future beyond the present life in relation to which these words may be used with still deeper emphasis. The man who has fled for refuge to the hope set before him, and has striven to walk with God here, may say with confidence, as he enters into the valley of the shadow of death, "I will not fear," for "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." II. THIS MAY ALSO BE THE LANGUAGE OF WICKED PRESUMPTION. 1. It is so when it is the utterance of idleness. No man has a right to neglect the duties of to-day, and to flatter himself that his life will be crowned with increased abundance on the morrow. 2. It is so when it is the language of extravagance and profligacy. The latter is the spirit in which it is used in this verse. "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine," etc. The men who used these words had evidently closed their ears to warning, and given themselves up to a life of self-indulgence. This was no doubt the feeling of the prodigal, who wasted his substance in riotous living. He promised himself that the debauches of to-day should be succeeded by still greater debauches on the morrow. We are not to burden ourselves with anxious cares about the future, but neither are we to pledge our future income to meet our present expenses. Nor are we to use, as bread for to-day, what God has sent to be sown as seed for the morrow. We ought to study the law of proportion, and to live in proportion to our income, to give in proportion to our income, and to save in proportion to our income and the position of responsibility in which we are placed, either as to family or work-people. 3. This is the language of sinful presumption when it is used as an excuse for the neglect of present privileges and opportunities. (1) It is often so used in relation to secular things. (2) But it is still more frequently used in relation to religion. Many plead this as an excuse for the neglect of religion. The time is not convenient. They are too young, or their temptations and difficulties are at present too great. They hope that their circumstances will undergo a change. But some, who have flattered themselves that they were too young, have not lived to become old. This excuse is also pleaded by some who have in them some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, for delay in publicly avowing themselves on the Lord's side, and casting in their lot with His people. There is something in the way to-day which they expect will be removed to-morrow. But, perhaps when to-morrow comes the difficulties are increased, and the resolve, which was almost formed, is wholly abandoned. This excuse is also pleaded for not entering into some sphere of usefulness to which you were clearly called. But the door closes and it is too late. (*A. Clark.*) *Optimism, false and true:*—Whether we are warranted in expecting the future to be better than the present, depends upon our standpoint; upon whether we look at the future as men of the world, purely and simply, or as followers of Jesus Christ. It may be the height of folly to say by our lips, or by our lives, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant;" but, on the

other hand, our so saying may involve the highest wisdom. I. How in prophesying good of the morrow, we may not be speaking correctly. 1. It is folly to prophesy good of to-morrow in respect to worldly things. 2. It is folly to prophesy good of to-morrow just because the future promises development. If to-morrow be more abundant than to-day, it will be because we have well spent to-day, and have not dreamed away our time and our opportunities. 3. It is folly to prophesy good of to-morrow unless we take steps to bring the good to pass. II. How in prophesying good of the future we may be speaking absolute truth. Is there anything about which we may say with certainty, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant"? Ability to talk thus, however, presupposes two things—1. That we know the grace of God. 2. Patient continuance in well-doing. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Discounting the future:*—In this picture, that exaggerated hopefulness which it describes seems to have been the result of intoxication. It is one who has filled himself with strong drink, who, from the midst of his revels, cries out, "To-morrow shall be as this day, nay, much more abundant." In point of fact, however, such artificial stimulus is in no wise necessary for the excitement of extravagant hopes. Such hopes are born out of circumstances the most discouraging and amid surroundings the most dismal and dreary. Let us bless God that it is so. I doubt whether life would be long endurable if it were otherwise. In fact, it is at the point when the spring of hopefulness fairly snaps that men and women break down. And yet, like some other forms of so-called nourishment, this is one which has a perilous power of enervation. It is worth while to remember that the future is simply and inevitably and inexorably the outgrowth and outcome of the present. The man or woman of ungoverned temper imagines that age will cool their blood and so diminish their provocations. But age weakens nothing save our powers of demonstration. And so of the rest of the infirmities of our nature. Does the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life—do our covetousness and our selfishness and our untruthfulness go through a sort of transformation-scene process, and emerge at some given point in our future in the guise of the Christian graces or the cardinal virtues? The future does not create progress, but only reveals it. And thus we see the province and, if I may so speak, the function in the moral and spiritual world of Hope. That function is to inspire the present. And, therefore, if I were asked to indite that legend or motto which should be the rule and law for every young life among us, I would write the one word "Now." (*H. C. Potter, D.D.*) *To-morrow:*—They were wicked men who spoke these words. Just think of what these words are in the mouth of a wicked man. 1. To-morrow shall be another day in which I shall rob God of His due. 2. I will tempt God another day; I will stand out against God. 3. Or, looking at God's mercy, he says, "Well, God is merciful, God is willing to bless me, but I will not be blessed." 4. If the man says this, it implies that he will give another day to fasten the fetters of sin firmer upon him. 5. Again, the wicked man says, "I will encourage sinners another day to continue in their sin; I will set them the example of sinning still further than I have done hitherto." But what are you doing when you are thus encouraging men in sin? You are doing your best to seal that sinner's doom. You are doing your best to make that sinner's death-bed terrible. You are doing the best you can to harden that sinner in defiance of God and in his rejection of all that might save his soul; you are making that man laugh his life away in frivolity and evil. 6. You are strengthening Satan in his great argument to keep men from Christ. What is that great argument? No hope for you; how can you expect to be saved? Have you not been living away from God? You have sinned away the day of grace. 7. If you say, "To-morrow shall be as this day," then what is your state? Why, that if you die to-morrow you shall go to hell. If you were to die to-day in your sins, you would go to hell. Then, if to-morrow is to be as to-day, you are deciding—I shall live to-morrow in such a state that if I die to-morrow I shall go to hell. 7. You are keeping Christ another day standing at the door. 8. You mean to have another day of resisting the strivings of God's spirit. (*J. M. Hussey.*) *Can we make sure of to-morrow?*—These words, as they stand, are the call of boon companions to new revelry. They are part of the prophet's picture of a corrupt age when the men of influence and position had thrown away their sense of duty, and had given themselves over, as aristocracies and plutocracies are ever tempted to do, to mere luxury and good living. Base and foolish as they are on such lips, it is possible to lift them from the mud, and take them as the utterance of a lofty and calm hope which will not be disappointed, and of a firm and lowly resolve which may ennoble life. Like a great many other sayings,

they may fit the mouth either of a sot or a saint. I. THIS EXPECTATION, IF DIRECTED TO ANY OUTWARD THINGS, IS AN ILLUSION AND A DREAM. It is base and foolish to be forecasting our pleasures, the true temper is to be forecasting our work. But, leaving that consideration, let us notice how useless such anticipation, and how mad such confidence, as that expressed in the text is, if directed to anything short of God. We are so constituted as that we grow into a persuasion that what has been will be, and yet we can give no sufficient reason to ourselves why we expect it. "The uniformity of the course of nature" is the corner-stone, not only of physical science, but, in a more homely form, of the wisdom which grows with experience. We all believe that the sun will rise to-morrow because it rose to-day, and for all the yesterdays. But there was a to-day which had no yesterday, and there will be a to-day which will have no to-morrow. The sun will rise for the last time. The uniformity had a beginning and will have an end. So, even as an axiom of thought, the anticipation that things will continue as they have been because they have been, seems to rest on an insufficient basis. How much more so, as to our own little lives and their surroundings! We shall be nearest the truth if we take due account, as we do so to-day, of the undoubted fact that the only thing certain about to-morrow is that it will not be as this day. II. BUT YET THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF SO USING THE WORDS AS TO MAKE THEM THE UTTERANCE OF A SOBER CERTAINTY WHICH WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME. We may send out our hope like Noah's dove, not to hover restlessly over a heaving ocean of change, but to light on firm, solid certainty, and fold its wearied wings there. Forecasting is ever close by foreboding. Hope is interwoven with fear, the golden threads of the weft crossing the dark ones of the warp, and the whole texture gleaming bright or glooming black according to the angle at which it is seen. So is it always until we turn our hope away from earth to God, and fill the future with the light of His presence and the certainty of His truth. We have an unchanging and an inexhaustible God, and He is the true guarantee of the future for us. The more we accustom ourselves to think of Him as shaping all that is contingent and changeful in the nearest and in the remotest to-morrow, and as being Himself the immutable portion of our souls, the calmer will be our outlook into the darkness, and the more bright will be the clear light of certainty which burns for us in it. III. LOOKED AT IN ANOTHER ASPECT, THESE WORDS MAY BE TAKEN AS THE VOW OF A FIRM AND LOWLY RESOLVE. There is a future which we can but very slightly influence, and the less we look at that the better every way. But there is also a future which we can mould as we wish—the future of our own characters, the only future which is really ours at all. In that region, it is eminently true that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." The law of continuity shapes our moral and spiritual characters. The awful power of habit solidifies actions into customs, and prolongs the reverberation of every note, once sounded, along the vaulted roof of the chamber where we live. To-day is the child of yesterday and the parent of to-morrow. That solemn certainty of the continuance and increase of moral and spiritual characteristics works in both good and bad, but with a difference. To secure its full blessing in the gradual development of the germs of good there must be constant effort and tenacious resolution. As we grow in years, we shall grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, until the day comes when we shall exchange earth for heaven. That will be the sublimest application of this text, when, dying, we can calmly be sure that though to-day be on this side and to-morrow on the other bank of the black river, there will be no break in the continuity, but only an infinite growth in our life, and heaven's to-morrow shall be as earth's to-day and much more abundant. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The changeful and the abiding:*—To-day's wealth may be to-morrow's poverty, to-day's health to-morrow's sickness, to-day's happy companionship of love to-morrow's aching solitude of heart, but to-day's God will be to-morrow's God, to-day's Christ will be to-morrow's Christ. Other fountains may dry up in heat or freeze in winter, but this knows no change, "in summer and winter it shall be." Other fountains may sink low in their basins after much drawing, but this is ever full, and after a thousand generations have drawn from it its stream is broad and deep as ever. Other fountains may be left behind on the march, and the wells and palm trees of each Elim on our road be succeeded by a dry and thirsty land where no water is, but this spring follows us all through the wilderness, and makes music and spreads freshness ever by our path. What may be round the next headland we know not; but this we know, that the same sunshine will make a broadening path across the waters right to where we rock on the unknown sea, and the same unmoving mighty star will burn for our guidance. So we may let the

waves and currents roll as they list—or rather as He wills, and be little concerned about the incidents or the companions of our voyage, since He is with us. (*Ibid.*) *Experience and hope:*—Experience is ever the parent of hope, and the latter can only build with the bricks which the former gives. (*Ibid.*) *The power of habit:*—How dreadfully that law of the continuity and development of character works in some men! By slow, imperceptible, certain degrees the evil gains upon them. Yesterday's sin smooths the path for to-day's. The temptation once yielded to gains power. The crack in the embankment which lets a drop or two ooze through is soon a hole which lets out a flood. It is easier to find a man who has done a wrong thing than to find a man who has done it only once. Peter denied his Lord thrice, and each time more easily than the time before. So, before we know it, the thin gossamer threads of single actions are twisted into a rope of habit, and we are "tied with the cords of our sin." (*Ibid.*) *Character the result of trivial actions:*—How important the smallest acts become when we think of them as thus influencing character! The microscopic creatures, thousands of which will go into a square inch, make the great white cliffs that beetle over the wildest sea and front the storm. So, permanent and solid character is built up out of trivial actions, and this is the solemn aspect of our passing days, that they are making us. (*Ibid.*) *Hope for men in the Christian redemption:*—We might well tremble before such a thought, which would be dreadful to the best of us, if it were not for pardoning mercy and renewing grace. The law of reaping what we have sown, or of continuing as we have begun, may be modified as far as our sins and failures are concerned. The entail may be cut off, and to-morrow need not inherit to-day's guilt, nor to-day's habits. The past may be all blotted out through the mercy of God in Christ. No evil habit need continue its dominion over us, nor are we obliged to carry on the bad tradition of wrong-doing into a future day, for Christ lives, and "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new." (*Ibid.*) *Presuming on the future:*—We have all read of that Persian prince who, having grown to man's estate and completed his education, divided his life into four decades. The first ten years of his life he would devote to travel, since travel, he rightly argued, was as much an educator as were books. The second decade he would employ in the affairs of government, since government is part of the duty of a prince. The third decade he would reserve for the pleasures and the benefits of friendship, since friendship is, after all, the melody and fragrance of life. And then the fourth decade he would give to God. It was a most taking and attractive plan of life. But it was marred by one considerable defect. During the first ten years the prince died, and for that contingency he had made no provision whatever. (*H. C. Potter, D.D.*) *To-morrow* is the most wonderful of days, or, as Isaiah has it, "a day great beyond measure." Its history outshines the record of centuries. It is the day on which idle men labour and fools reform. It is the day when every man does his duty. It is the harvest-time of good intentions. To-morrow the worst of sinners will be a saint. To-morrow the frivolous pleasure-seeker will be transformed into a serious-minded devotee, a whole-souled worker for the good of humanity. To-morrow the dishonest man will be honest, the immoral man will be pure, the selfish man will be benevolent. To-morrow bad habits will be resolutely overcome, evil tempers will be conquered, wrong desires will be banished. To-morrow myriads of men and women will heed the call of Christ. If the world could but see the bright dawning of its mythical glory! But it never can. To-morrow is like the rainbow's end, which continually moves on and keeps its distance undiminished when foolish children seek its golden treasure. (*G. H. Hubbard.*)

CHAPTER LVII.

VERS. 1, 2. **The righteous perisheth.**—*The righteous perishing:*—In view of this prevailing demoralization and worldliness (chap. lvi. 9–12), the righteous one succumbs to the grinding weight of external and internal sufferings: he "perishes," dies before his time (Eccles. vii. 15), from the midst of his contemporaries, disappearing from this life (Ps. xii. 1; Micah vii. 2), and no man lays it to heart, *i. e.* no one considers the Divine accusation and threatening implied in this early death. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) "Merciful men":—Literally, men of piety. (*Prof. J.*

Skinner, D.D.) *Good men die:*—Righteousness delivereth from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. (*M. Henry.*) *Death of the righteous:*—1. One reason why, when the righteous dieth, no man layeth it to heart is because the world do not know the righteous. 2. Another reason is, disinclination of all men by nature to lay such things to heart. 3. They do not think it of much importance. But the death of every good man is a loss to the world, a loss to the Church militant—the people of God are the salt of the earth, and the more taken away and the less left, the less likely are we to be blessed as a nation. (*James Wells.*) *Early death:*—Such early removals form a problem insoluble by our poor reason. They seem, at first sight, inconsistent alike with the Divine wisdom and power and love. They look almost like the frustration of God's plans and purposes, a failure in His sovereign designs. It is the architect just completing His work, when that work comes with a crash to the ground. It is the sculptor putting the finishing strokes of his chisel on the virgin marble, when the toil of months or years strews the floor of his studio. It is the gardener bringing forth from his conservatory the long-husbanded plants in their freshness and beauty, to bask in early summer sun, when a frost or hailstorm unexpectedly comes, and in one night they have perished! (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Early death:*—Why is the young soldier stricken down just when the armour of life has been assayed? Wherefore hath God apparently thus made His noblest work in vain? The words of Isaiah give a twofold answer to these questions and mysteries; the one negative, the other positive. I. THE NEGATIVE ANSWER. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." It was so in the case of Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 18–20). II. THE POSITIVE EXPLANATION. "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness;" or rather, as it has been rendered, "each one walking straight before him;" or as Bishop Lowth translates it, "he that walketh in the straight path." 1. Josiah, the good, the pious, when he died, "entered into peace." It is a beautiful Old Testament evidence of the immediate blessedness of the departed righteous. His body rested in the tomb, as in a "bed" or couch; his spirit—the spirit that walked so "uprightly" on earth, with no divergence from the path of duty and piety—continues, in a loftier state of existence, this elevated "walk." The work cut short in this lower world is not arrested; it is only transferred. In a higher and loftier sphere he still pursues these active ministries of righteousness. There is an evident contrast between these opening words of the chapter and the terrible refrain with which it closes—"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" none in life, none in death, none in their limitless future. But "the righteous," thus taken away, "enter into peace." 2. Another thought, too, is brought out in the original which we miss in our translation, and which suggests the same assurance of immediate bliss. It occurs in the words just quoted—"The righteous is taken away," "Merciful men are taken away;" this in the Hebrew is, "The righteous, the merciful, are gathered"—gathered to their fathers. 3. One other thought on early death may be suggested by these words. While the spirit is pursuing its onward path of bliss and glory, it has not, in the truest sense, bid farewell to its earthly sphere. The lips are silenced, the music of the voice is hushed, the blank of the absent is too painfully realized. But "the righteous" survive dissolution even in this world; in their deathless memories of goodness and worth, they continue to "walk." The old promise dictated by the sweet singer of Israel (apparently paradoxical) becomes literally true, regarding those prematurely taken away—"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." For what, after all, is long life? Is it measured and computed by formal arithmetic? counted by days, or weeks, or months, or years? No! the fourscore years of a misspent life is no life at all. It is a bankruptcy of being. It may be a life only sowing and perpetuating baneful influences; an untimely birth would be better. Whereas, that is the truest length of days, where, it may be for a brief but bright and consecrated season, some young life has shone gloriously for God, and which, though now a fallen meteor, has left a trail of light behind it, for which parent and brother and sister will for ever bless Him who gave the transient boon! (*Ibid.*) *The death of the good:*—I. THEIR DEATH IS THE PERISHING OF THE BODY.—1. Why, then, pamper the body? 2. Why centre interests on the wants and enjoyments of the body? II. THEIR DEATH IS GENERALLY DISREGARDED BY MANKIND. How soon the best of men are forgotten. There are two reasons for disregarding the death of the good. 1. The thought of death is repugnant to the heart. 2. The concerns of life are all-absorbing. III. THEIR DEATH IS A DELIVERANCE FROM ALL THE EVILS THAT ARE COMING ON THE WORLD. "Taken away from

the evil to come." IV. THEIR DEATH IS A STEP INTO A HIGHER LIFE. "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds." 1. The death of the good as to the body is only sleep—natural, refreshing, temporary. 2. Their souls march on. "Each one walking in his uprightness." Endless progress. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (*Homilist.*) The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.—*Spared future evil:*—1. It may be from the evil of personal suffering. The prolongation of life to old age often involves an immense amount of bodily ills and pains. 2. It may be to spare the heart of affection sore trials. How often do children grow up to break the hearts of fond parents. 3. It may be to take His child out of harm's way. 4. It may be to shield him from some impending calamity that is coming upon the Church or the world. 5. Or (if we accept the marginal reading) it is to save them "from that which is evil." Life itself, under the curse of sin, is evil, even in its best estate, and the God of mercy cuts it short and receives His loved one into His bosom. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The blessings of short life:*—We all spend much time in panegyric of longevity. But I propose to preach about the blessings of an abbreviated earthly existence. I. IT MAKES ONE'S LIFE WORK VERY COMPACT. II. MORAL DISASTER MIGHT COME UPON THE MAN IF HE TARRIED LONGER. III. ONE IS THE SOONER TAKEN OFF FROM THE DEFENSIVE. IV. ONE ESCAPES SO MANY BEREAVEMENTS. V. IT PUTS ONE SOONER IN THE CENTRE OF THINGS. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. He shall enter into peace.—*The believer in life, death, and eternity:*—Taking them together, the words of the text will lead us to contemplate the child of God—I. IN THE STRENGTH AND VIGOUR OF LIFE. II. IN THE SUFFERING AND THE ARTICLE OF DEATH. III. IN THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISSOLUTION, AS THEY AFFECT BOTH BODY AND SOUL. (*J. Haslegrave, M.A.*) *A glimmering of New Testament consolation:*—Here is a glimmering of the consolation in the New Testament, that the death of the righteous man is better than the present life, because it is the entrance into peace. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion.—*Smooth stones:*—The term "portion" suggests that the "smooth stones" were fetishes. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *False gods the idolater's portion:*—In stony valleys they set up their gods, which they called their portion, and took for their lot, as God's people take Him for their lot and portion. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way.—*The weariness of sin:*—The text is a striking representation of the sinner's conduct in fruitless efforts to obtain happiness anywhere but from heaven. He wanders from object to object, he becomes weary in his pursuit, yet he will not abandon it. I. HE PURSUES A WEARISOME COURSE. Nothing is so wearisome as fruitless efforts for happiness. 1. The sensual course for happiness is a wearisome one. The voluptuary and the debauchee very soon show exhaustion. 2. The secular course for happiness is a wearisome one. He who seeks happiness in the pursuit of gain will soon find it wearisome. 3. The intellectual course for happiness is a wearisome one. He who looks for true happiness in study and research will soon find it a weariness. 4. The superstitious course is a wearisome one. Millions are sinking into religious superstition—pilgrimages, penances, prayers, and devotional routine. What millions are found wearied in this path! II. THOUGH THE COURSE IS WEARISOME HE PERSEVERES. "Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." Although Israel was wearied in seeking foreign help, still it continued; so with the sinner. To persevere in these wearisome methods for happiness is very foolish. 1. Because they will never become easier than they are. On the contrary, he who pursues these methods of happiness will become more and more weary on his way. 2. Because there is a pleasant way to true happiness. What is that? The loving surrender of your nature to God. The religious way to happiness is pleasant, because—(1) It is worthy of your nature. (2) Agreeable to your conscience. (3) Promising to your hope. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." How suited is the invitation of Christ to the wearied millions of earth who are seeking for happiness in wrong directions: "Come unto Me, all ye," etc. (*Homilist.*) *Man's weary way:*—I. THE WAY WHICH IS HERE SUGGESTED TO US. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way." The way which the Israelites took was their own way as distinguished from God's way. The way in which a man is walking, and by which he is seeking for salvation, until he has found peace through Christ, is more or less directly his own way. II. THIS

WAY, WHICH IS MAN'S OWN WAY, IS SPOKEN OF AS A GREAT WAY. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way." Looking at salvation as it is in itself, at the deliverance which is desired, a great deliverance is necessary; looking to the efforts which man will make to effect and attain this deliverance, great efforts are evidently necessary, and great efforts are frequently made. Micah speaks of a man giving thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, yea, giving the life of his firstborn for the sin of his soul, if perchance he may save that soul. And it is perfectly marvellous to see the efforts which men have made, and are making, in false religions, to secure that which they desire, namely, their soul's salvation. III. THIS WAY OF MAN'S OWN SEEKING IS A WEARY WAY. What disappointments the Israelites met with! So with a man seeking salvation in his own way as distinct from God's way. Just in proportion as a man is in earnest, just in proportion to the depth of his convictions of sin and righteousness, just in proportion to the sense which he has of the holiness of God, and the realities of eternity, will be the man's dissatisfaction with his own efforts and his own acts of self-denial. IV. Although this is a weary way, and an unsatisfying way, yet IT HAS IN IT SOME PROMISES OF SUCCOUR AND SOME POWER OF SATISFACTION, WHICH PREVENTS THE MAN FROM WHOLLY DESPAIRING. The man "finds life to his hand." There is enough in what he is doing, there is enough in what he is finding, to prevent him from wholly despairing. These persons are not prepared to "say there is no hope;" they are not prepared to despair of salvation in the manner in which they are seeking it; they are not wholly cast down. "Therefore thou wast not grieved," not wholly disheartened. They go on persevering and pressing forward, hoping that a brighter day will come. Contrast with this way of man God's way. The way of salvation sought and followed by the Jews resembles very much the way of salvation which the natural heart of man follows when he pursues and seeks that salvation; but now, what is the way which God would have us to walk in, as contrasted with this way of man's own devising? That which marks God's way, and distinguishes it especially from man's way, is this—that man's way is a way of fear and dread, while God's way is a way of love. "But how," you will say, "are we to pass from this state, which is man's natural state of seeking for salvation, to that state which is described as God's method of seeking and conferring salvation?" The prophet tells us (vers. 18, 19). (*E. Bayley, M.A.*) "*The life of thine hand*" may mean, "a revival of thy vigour." (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.—*Hope, yet no hope: no hope, yet hope* (with Jer. xviii. 12, "And they said, There is no hope," etc.):—The subtlety of the human heart exerts itself to the utmost to prevent that heart from trusting in the Saviour, and while evil is always cunning, it shows itself to be supremely so in its efforts to guard the Cross against the approaches of sinners. By the Cross, as the Saviour said, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. There are two phases in spiritual life which well illustrate the deceitfulness of the heart. The first is that described in my first text, in which the man, though wearied in his many attempts, is not and cannot be convinced of the hopelessness of self-salvation. When you shall have hunted the man out of this, you will then meet with a new difficulty, which is described in the second text. Finding there is no hope in himself, the man draws the unwarrantable conclusion that there is no hope for him in God. It is self-righteousness in both cases. In the one case it is the soul content with self-righteousness, in the second place it is man sullenly preferring to perish rather than receive the righteousness of Christ. I. We have to speak of A HOPE WHICH IS NO HOPE. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope," etc. This well pictures the pursuit of men after satisfaction in earthly things. They are content because they have found the life of their hand. Living from hand to mouth is enough for them; that they are still alive, that they possess present comforts and present enjoyments, this contents the many. As for the future, they say, "Let it take care of itself." They have no foresight for their eternal state; the present hour absorbs them. 1. The text applies very eminently to those who are seeking salvation by ceremonies. 2. A great mass of people, even though they reject priestcraft, make themselves priests, and rely upon their good works. The way of salvation by works, if it were possible, would be a very wearisome way. How many good works would carry a man to heaven, would be a question which it were very hard to answer. 3. Many are looking for salvation to another form of self-deception, namely the way of repentance and reformation. II. We shall now turn to the second text. "And they said, There is no hope," etc. Here we have NO HOPE—AND YET HOPE. When the sinner has at last been driven by stress of weather from the roadstead of his

own confidence, then he flies to the dreary harbour of despair. Despair is the mother of all sorts of evil. When a man says, "There is no hope of heaven for me;" then he throws the reins upon the neck of his lusts, and goes on from bad to worse. There is hope for you in Him whom God has provided to be the Saviour of such as you are. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 14. **And shall say, Cast ye up.**—*God righteous, yet gracious:*—The second half of ver. 13 forms a transition to the next section, which is a promise of salvation to the true Israel. In striking contrast to the menacing tone of ver. 3 f. is the impressive and elevated language in which the prophet now sets forth the gracious thoughts of Jehovah towards His erring but repentant people. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *A road to God:*—In this passage the cry goes forth, not on behalf of a conqueror, or a sovereign, but on behalf of God's people. They are the honoured procession for which a road is to be prepared. "Cast up, cast up"—that is, heap up, fill in—"prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of My people." The figure, then, is striking. As royalty demanded for itself a smooth path, a road from which all dangers and obstructions were taken away, so a soul that is on its way to God has thrown over it, as it were, something of the sovereignty which it approaches, and a mysterious voice is heard, crying, "Clear the way! heap up! heap up! cast out the stumbling-stones." (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Spiritual stumbling-blocks:*—1. The want of a true and large ideal of Christian life, as an inward, spiritual and Divine disposition, and the attempt to live in mere conformity to rules, and with a vague impression that if one conforms to the Church he shall in some way, he knows scarcely how, be saved, is itself one of the causes of perpetual stumbling. The attempt to live merely for the fulfilment of social moralities; the attempt to live so that all the rules which are prescribed by all those who are governing in the Lord, shall be obeyed; the attempt to live upon any such low conception as that of regulations, conventions, observances, is sure to make the Christian life poor, and the travel uncertain. For "a new creature in Christ Jesus" is the apostolic definition of a Christian. Our aspiration and effort will be in proportion to the dignity and the ideality, if I may so say, of our conception of what religion is. If we suppose it to be simply not doing evil, we shall put forth but very little exertion, and we shall receive but very little stimulus. 2. The attempt to live the Christian life with a low tone of feeling is a reason why men do not make greater progress. In all the writings of the New Testament you will find that fervour, intensity is required in every feeling. We not only need to have moralities, but we need to have Christian graces, which are, as it were, orchids, epiphytes, and fed upon higher and purer things—light, and moisture, and other elements that the air contains. Now, none of these can thrive in our temperate climate. A temperate climate is good for temperate things; but for intensities it is not good. And many dominant and characteristic traits of Christian character are such as never can be brought out without fervour. 3. Lack of deep and continuous devotion. This is either from the want of a sense of the great spirit-world on whose border we live perpetually, or it is the result of excessive occupation, over-occupation, which crowds all the time, and prevents one from ripening in a true Christian devotion. 4. Another hindrance which men find on the road of progress in their Christian life, is their ignorance as to the effect of outward activity in developing inward fervour, and the effect of inward fervour in developing outward activity—as to the effect of the reciprocal action of the inward and the outward life. Men are accustomed to separate these qualities, which should never be disjoined. Men should be active that they may be emotive; and they should be emotive, that emotion may work into activity. 5. A very common hindrance to Christian development is the attempt of men to perform their Christian work outside of their appropriate spheres. Wherever you are, there begin the battle; there subdue everything that stands in conflict with the law of conscience, and the law of love, and the law of purity, and the law of truth. Begin the fight wherever God sounds the trumpet, and He will give you grace that as your day is, so your strength shall be. But until we cease dividing our life into two parts—secular and religious—we never shall be very eminent and consistent as Christians; we never shall make any very great progress in the Christian life. 6. Too much companionship is not good. 7. This stands closely connected with another social hindrance to the development of true Christian life, and that is, the addiction of men to pleasure. I mean not indulgence in wasting and disallowable pleasures, but an excessive addiction to recreation of any kind. We are bound to grow in grace. If we do not grow, we are bound to know the reason why. (*Ibid.*) *The way of religion* is now

cast up; it is a highway; ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them. (*M. Henry.*) *The way of Christ prepared:*—I. THE STUMBLING-BLOCKS WHICH CHRISTIANS HAVE THROWN IN THE WAY OF THE JEWS. 1. Persecution. 2. Contempt. 3. Idolatry. 4. Neglect of the law of Moses. 5. Unbelief of the prophets. II. THE STUMBLING-BLOCKS WHICH THE JEWS HAVE PUT IN THEIR OWN WAY. 1. Self-righteousness. 2. Traditions of men. 3. Covetousness. 4. A false view of God. 5. Unbelief in the Son of God. III. THE BLESSED FRUITS OF THEIR REMOVAL. These fruits are set before us in the verses which follow our text. 1. Humiliation and contrition (ver. 15). 2. Revival and healing. The promise goes on thus: "To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. I have seen his ways and will heal him." 3. Comfort and peace. "I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him" (vers. 18, 19). 4. Gladness and glory. To these the prophet calls our attention in the latter chapters (lxv. 18, 19, lxvi. 12). (*E. Bickersteth.*) *Roads cleared:*—What is the way, the way of salvation? Jesus Christ says, "I am the way." This is the entrance into the way, and this is the track of that way even to the end—trust in Christ. "Are not good works needed?" says one. They always flow from faith in Christ. Such being the way, it is very simple. Straight as an arrow, is it not? And yet in this way there are stumbling-blocks. I. LET US SHOW WHY THIS IS. 1. The way of believing is such an uncommon way. Men do not understand the way of trusting. They want to see, to reason, to argue. How very difficult it would be for a cow, that has always lived by the day the short life that can be fed on grass, if it had to live by reason, as men do. And when man has to live by faith he is as awkward at it as a cow would be at reasoning. He is out of his element. 2. Men, when they are really seeking salvation, are often much troubled in mind. They feel that if God be just He must punish them for their wrong-doing. And when they are told that if they believe in Jesus Christ all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven, they wonder how it can be. Conscience makes unbelievers of us all; and stumbling-blocks are created by our trembling condition. 3. Besides this, men are often ignorant of the way of salvation. I am not speaking now as though I blamed them. I was brought up myself to attend the house of God regularly. Yet when I began to see the Lord, I did not know the way of salvation. I knew the letter of it, but not the real meaning: how can a man know it till the Spirit of God reveals it to him? 4. Satan is always ready to prevent souls from finding peace in Christ. Thus have I shown why there are so many stumbling-blocks. II. Now I am going to TRY TO LIFT SOME OF THEM OUT OF THE WAY. 1. Here is one of them. One man says, "I would fain believe in this Jesus Christ of whom you tell me, but if I were to come to God through Christ, would He receive me?" "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." In all the history of the human race there never has been found a man that came to Jesus Christ whom Christ rejected yet. 2. "But," says another, "I am a very peculiar person. I could very well believe that any man in the world who trusted Christ would be saved except myself; but I cannot think that He would save me, for I am so odd." Ah, I am odd myself, and I had the same feeling that you have. I thought that I was a lot left out of the catalogue. If you knew other people you would find that there are other strange people besides yourself; and if God saves so many strange people, why should He not save you? He delights to do wonders. He will crowd heaven with curiosities of mercy. 3. But I hear another say, "Sir, I have such a horrible sense of sin; I cannot rest in my bed! I cannot think that I shall be saved." Wait a bit there; let me speak to this person over here. What is your trouble? "My trouble is, sir, that I have no sense of sin. I know that I am a sinner, and a great sinner; but I do not think that I shall be saved, for I have no horrible thoughts." Will you change with the other man? Will he change with you? I should not advise either of you to make any change; for, in the first place, despairing thoughts are not necessary to salvation; and, in the second place, so long as you know yourself a sinner, and are willing to confess it, such thoughts are untrue. Despairing one, look to the Cross and live; and thou who dost not despair, look to the same Cross and live; for there is salvation for every eye that looks to Jesus crucified. 4. A trembler cries, "I am afraid to come and trust Christ, because I do not know whether I am one of the elect." If you trust Jesus Christ I will tell you then that you are God's elect, to a certainty. 5. "Ah," says another person, "I think I have committed the unpardonable sin." Do you long to be delivered from the power of sin? Then you have not committed the unpardonable sin, because it is a sin unto death, and after a

man commits it he never has a living wish or desire after God from that moment. 6. "Oh, but," says another person, "my stumbling-block is this: that the whole thing seems too good to be true, that I, by simply believing in Jesus Christ, shall be saved." I confess that it does seem too good to be true, but it is not. God in Christ Jesus is clearly capable of marvellous deeds of grace. There are some stumbling-blocks that I cannot remove; they must always stand there, I am afraid. 7. An objector says to me, "I would believe in Jesus; I have no fault to find with Him, but, then, look at His followers, many of them are hypocrites." We do look at His professed followers, and the tears are in our eyes, for the worst enemies He has are they of His own household. Suppose Judas does betray Christ, is Christ any the worse for that? You are not asked to trust in Judas, you are asked to trust in Christ. The reason why it pays to make bad sovereigns is because good ones are so valuable; and that is why it pays certain people, as they think, to pass themselves off as Christians. If there were no real Christians, there would be no pretenders to that name. 8. "But," says another, "here is my stumbling-block: if I were to believe in Christ, and become a Christian, I should have to alter my whole life." Just so. There would have to be a turning of everything upside down; but then He that sits upon the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." 9. "Oh, but," says one, "I should have to run the gauntlet in my family if I became a Christian." Which is the better thing, do you think—to be sneered at for doing right or to be commended for doing wrong? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Take up the stumbling-block.—*Stumbling-blocks:*—As a Conqueror the Messiah was coming, but there was great sin and unpreparedness. Hence the prophet cried, "Take up, take up the stumbling-blocks." Christ is still advancing in power in the world. His truth is the direct and permanent way by which man may tread to heaven and immortality. Various stumbling-blocks of human placing need removal. I. There is the stumbling-block of SELFISHNESS. This has always cumbered the way. Ananias and Judas yielded to it. II. Close by this block is another, that of INTOLERANCE. The Church, strong outwardly, was impatient of divergence of opinion. III. TERRORISM had also to be rolled out of the way. Figure was taken for fact. The great Father was presented in the guise of an implacable judge. Harsh representations of God and future punishment caused revolt. IV. There is the stumbling-block of an ELABORATE CEREMONIAL SYSTEM. V. The block of INDIFFERENTISM, on the other hand, also needs removal. Indifferentism is only another name for selfism. It should matter to each man if his fellow suffers. VI. Some will say that all the stumbling-blocks mentioned are nothing compared with those formed by THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. The last is a conglomerate rock. Worldly attractions, amusements, desires, lusts, are often too strong for those who profess to be unworldly. Byron said, "The inconsistencies of professing Christians made me an infidel." Was he alone? Conclusion: How are these evils, these blocks of offence to be removed, and a way made for the coming of our King Jesus? There must be more faith in the presence and potency of the Holy Spirit in the Church. (*Ibid.*) *The road-mender* (with lviii. 12, "the restorer of paths"):—Few are the exceptionally gifted men and women whom God calls to be pioneers, discoverers and creators of new paths—road-makers. "Primal needed work," to use Walt Whitman's phrase, is not possible for the majority of us. We have not the genius, the energy, the courage, the self-reliance, the independence of intellectual comradeship which characterize the select company who are able to hew their way, like Stanley's men in "Darkest Africa," through forests, and force their way through wildernesses and deserts, thus opening up new highways for human thought and life, and action, and civilization, and new highways for God. But we can all be road-menders. We can all aid in removing the stumbling-blocks out of the way. We can all be restorers of paths. This is the humbler task. It demands fewer talents, less daring, less originality than pioneer work, but who can gauge its value? Who will venture to affirm that it is less honouring or less acceptable to God, and less of a boon to man and the world? Perhaps, after all, to mend the old roads, to restore the former paths which have fallen out of repair, and make them straighter, safer, and more comfortable to the feet of travel-worn pilgrims, is as noble and useful a vocation as any to which God calls His servants. I. What need there is for road-menders and restorers of paths in THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WORLD! To protect the widow and orphan; to stand by the oppressed; to ameliorate the lot of the starving poor and the slaves of the sweater; to grapple with the drink curse, the gambling curse, the curse of impurity, the curse of an inordinate love of gold and pleasure; the curse of preventable poverty, preventable disease, preventable

premature old age and death—what a field of service for God and man! II. What need there is for road-menders and restorers of paths in OUR NATIONAL AFFAIRS! As lovers of our country; as patriots who have a share in shaping the home and foreign policies of our Governments and moulding public thought and national conduct and character, let us do what we can to lead our nation into saner and safer and nobler paths. III. What need there is for road-menders and restorers of paths in THE RELIGIOUS WORLD! Is not much of our Churchianity to-day an empty form, a mere show? How far removed from our professedly Christian life in the Church are our commercial life, our political life, our home life, our society life in the world! What an amount of nominal Church membership and formal Christianity there is nowadays! IV. What need there is for road-menders and restorers of paths in THE SPHERE OF PERSONAL GOODNESS AND HELPFULNESS! After all, the best contribution any one of us can make to the glory of God and the welfare of man is that of a really good life; a life fashioned after the pattern given us by our Lord and Master; a life filled by the Holy Spirit, a life of friendship and filial fellowship with God. (*R. Briggs, M.A.*)

Vers. 15–21. **For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.**—*A royal manifesto*:—In His character as Sovereign, God brings before us, and before His loyal subjects in every age, what we may regard as His two titles and His two palaces. I. HIS TWO TITLES. 1. "The High and Lofty One." The nation had lapsed into unblushing idolatry. They had made surrender of their traditional creed, and specially of its fundamental article—the personality and unity of Jehovah; degrading it with the abominations of the Phœnician and Assyrian mythologies. In addition to altars to Baal, crowning the high places, statues of Astarte were erected amid the groves of Terebinth. This latter goddess seemed to have been adopted by Ahaz as his tutelary deity; an awful and debasing counterfeit truly of the Supreme: sitting on a lion, holding a thunderbolt and sceptre in either hand, and her head surrounded with the crescent moon. No king, before or since, so defiled and desecrated the holy temple. Isaiah himself, amid this awful deterioration, this widespread atheism, might well be apt to give way to despair. His faith at times could hardly fail to be clouded. But the God he served calmed his fears and allayed his apprehensions by a special proclamation of His glory and goodness, "I am the alone High and Lofty One." 2. "Whose name is Holy." The worst characteristic of these heathen deities was their unholiness. II. HIS TWO PALACES. 1. The palace of eternity. "That inhabiteth eternity." In nothing do we feel how puny we are, as when we attempt to scan the marvels and glories of this Divine dwelling-place, with its illimitable corridors of space and time. 2. What a transition, from the halls and corridors of eternity, to the human bosom! There is a twofold description here given of this humbler tabernacle where Jehovah dwells—a twofold characteristic of the human heart. (1) It is contrite. (2) After contrition, or as the sequel and complement of it, comes humility. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The High gracious to the lowly*:—I. Let us consider WHO IS SPEAKING IN THE TEXT. This is necessary to a right apprehension of what He says, and particularly to a clear perception of those riches of condescension, compassion, and grace, which His words unfold to our view. 1. He is "the High and Lofty One." 2. He inhabiteth eternity. He is therefore as different as possible from the children of men. 3. His name is Holy. II. Let us consider WHAT IS SAID BY HIM. 1. He tells us that He "dwells in the high and holy place;" that is, in the heaven of heavens, the peculiar residence of the Deity, where His glory is chiefly manifested, and His favour is chiefly enjoyed. Heaven is not only high, but the highest place in the whole creation. There is no other place that can for a moment be compared with it, either in glory or felicity. Nor is there any other place so holy. 2. God here says that He dwells also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. By the man thus described we are to understand the sinner who has been enlightened by the Spirit of God, who has been convinced of his sinfulness, and brought to true repentance. 3. God here tells us what is the end He has in view in dwelling with such characters. It is to "revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The same God that afflicts the sinner revives and cheers him. Learn—(1) To entertain right thoughts of God. (2) To harbour just thoughts of the contrite, humble, and penitent offender. (3) How we may obtain solid happiness. (*D. Rees.*) *God in heaven and in the heart*:—God has two special dwellings—the high and holy place, *i. e.* the heaven not merely of space, but of pure and blessed spirits; and the hearts of men who have felt their sin and their need of God. 1. These two dwellings are far apart. How wide and great

the one, how small and narrow the other! How permanent the one, how passing the other! How bright and untroubled the one, how dark and troubled the other! 2. They have yet something in common. The high place is akin to the humble spirit, for to see the far and high, and to long for it, is to rise; to have something of God within lifts up. The holy place is akin to the contrite heart; for to feel the sin and separation is to reach to the holy, and this comes from having God already in the heart at work. 3. They are to be brought into one. God dwells in them to unite them, to revive the spirit, to give life. And where God gives true life, He gives the earnest of heaven and eternity. These hearts are therefore on the way to being God's perpetual home. 4. The full end of these words is in Christ. He came from the high and holy place to dwell among men, and find a way into human hearts—to make heaven and the heart one and eternal. (*British Weekly.*) *Man's greatness and God's greatness:*—I. THAT IN WHICH THE GREATNESS OF GOD CONSISTS. 1. The first measurement, so to speak, which is given of God's greatness, is in respect of time. He inhabiteth eternity. 2. There is a second measure given us of God in this verse. It is in respect of space. He dwelleth in the high and lofty place. He dwelleth, moreover, in the most insignificant place—even the heart of man. And the idea by which the prophet would here exhibit to us the greatness of God is that of His eternal omnipresence. It is difficult to say which conception carries with it the greatest exaltation—that of boundless space or that of unbounded time. 3. The third measure which is given us of God respects His character. His name is Holy—(1) The chief knowledge which we have of God's holiness comes from our acquaintance with unholiness. We know what impurity is—God is not that. We scarcely can be rightly said to know, that is to feel, what God is. And therefore this is implied in the very name of holiness. Holiness in the Jewish sense means simply separateness. From all that is wrong, and mean, and base, our God is for ever separate. (2) There is another way in which God gives to us a conception of what this holiness implies. Holiness is only a shadow to our minds, till it receives shape and substance in the life of Christ. (3) There is a third light in which God's holiness is shown to us, and that is in the sternness with which He recoils from guilt. Revelation opens to us a scene beyond the grave, when this shall be exhibited in full operation. There will be an everlasting banishment from God's presence of that impurity on which the last efforts had been tried in vain. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that this is only a matter of revelation. Traces of it we have now on this side the sepulchre. Human life is full of God's recoil from sin. II. THAT IN WHICH MAN'S GREATNESS CONSISTS. 1. The nature of that greatness. In these two things the greatness of man consists. One is to have God so dwelling in us as to impart His character to us; and the other is to have God so dwelling in us that we recognize His presence, and know that we are His and He is ours. 2. The persons who are truly great. These the Holy Scripture has divided into two classes—those who are humble and those who are contrite in heart. Or rather, it will be observed that it is the same class of character under different circumstances. Humbleness is the frame of mind of those who are in a state of innocence, contrition of those who are in a state of repentant guilt. Let not the expression "innocence" be misunderstood. Innocence in its true and highest sense never existed but once upon this earth. Innocence cannot be the religion of man now. But yet there are those who have walked with God from youth, not quenching the spirit which He gave them, and who are therefore comparatively innocent beings. They are described here as the humble in heart. Two things are required for this state of mind. One is that a man should have a true estimate of God, and the other is that he should have a true estimate of himself. The other class of those who are truly great are the contrite in spirit. Conclusion:—1. The danger of coming into collision with such a God as our God. Day by day we commit sins of thought and word of which the dull eye of man takes no cognizance. He whose name is Holy cannot pass them by. God can wait, for He has a whole eternity before Him in which He may strike. 2. The heavenly character of condescension. It is not from the insignificance of man that God's dwelling with him is so strange. But the marvel is that the habitation which He has chosen for Himself is an impure one. If we would be Godlike, we must follow in the same steps. Our temptation is to do exactly the reverse. We are for ever wishing to obtain the friendship and the intimacy of those above us in the world. 3. The guilt of two things of which the world is full—vanity and pride. The distinction consists in this—the vain man looks for the admiration of others—the proud man requires nothing but his own. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *A voice from eternity to the children of time:*—I. THIS VOICE REVEALS AN EXISTENCE THAT

STANDS IN SUBLIME CONTRAST WITH ALL THAT IS HUMAN. II. THIS VOICE REVEALS A PRIVILEGE OF IMMENSE VALUE TO THE GOOD. 1. This VOICE reveals God's special regard for a good man's experience. This High and Lofty One condescends to regard with special interest those of a "contrite" and "humble" spirit. 2. This VOICE reveals God's special contact with a good man's existence. He not only dwells in the "high and holy place," but "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." "Dwelling" implies a close intimacy. He is, by the influences of His love, nearer to the good than He is to others; near to guide, to succour, to strengthen. Dwelling implies not only a close intimacy, but a permanent one. He does not come and go as an occasional sojourner; He continues as a settled resident in the soul. He is always with His people, in sorrow and joy, in life and death. 3. This VOICE reveals God's special quickening of a good man's spirit. "To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God comes down to the spirit, not to crush it, but to revive it, to give it a new life, to bring out by the sunshine of His presence all its dormant germs, and to make it fruitful in all good works. He gives it a life, over which circumstances, time, and death, have no power. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God*:—He is a God, saith one, whose nature is majesty, whose place is immensity, whose time is eternity, whose life is sanctity, whose power is omnipotency, whose work is mercy, whose wrath is justice, whose throne is sublimity, whose seat is humility. (*J. Trapp.*) *God's eternity*:—Though intellectually incomprehensible, the thought of it is inestimably valuable. 1. It furnishes us with the only satisfactory account of the origin of the universe. Creation is but God's eternal thoughts in shape, His eternal will in action. 2. It shows to us our incapability of pronouncing upon His ways. During our existence here, He is working out a plan that, like Himself, never had a beginning and will never have an end. 3. It enables us to give an eternal freshness to the Bible. Being eternal, what He thought when He inspired men to write the Book He thinks now. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The contrite spirit*:—The word "contrition" in the text is a very strong word. It literally means a pounded state, as of a stone which by blow on blow of heavy hammers, or the grinding of wagon wheels, has been crushed into dust. By this vigorous metaphor it strives to make vivid to us the moral state of a man whose whole strength of self-reliance and erectness of moral carriage has been broken down through the sense of guilt and moral weakness; one who by repeated trials of his own instability, and blow after blow of discouraging rebuke from God, feels himself left in the path of evil a heart-broken man, over whom the trampling feet of innumerable masterful sins, with all their evil followers, seem to find free passage; a man beaten down and crushed out of spirit by vain struggles against sin and inescapable poundings from the violated laws of God. Now this moral condition, though it looks hopeless, is really a hopeful one. It is the only hopeful one. And the hopefulness of it lies here, that no man is ever so crushed in heart by sin unless he hates sin. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The High and Lofty One dwelling with the contrite man* (with lxvi. 1, 2):—I. We remark that, FROM ETERNITY, THE RESIDENCE OF GOD HAS ALWAYS CORRESPONDED WITH HIS INFINITE NATURE AND PERFECTIONS. This seems to be implied in the text in three particulars: being eternal, He has inhabited eternity; as the High and Lofty One, He has occupied the throne of supremacy; and His name being Holy, He has dwelt in the high and holy place. II. IF HE CONDESCEND TO HOLD INTERCOURSE WITH MAN, IT CAN ONLY BE IN HARMONY WITH THE SAME PRINCIPLE. He has not one principle for one world and another principle for another. Select any principle of His conduct, and you will find that, like Himself, it is from everlasting to everlasting; and all this owing to that infinite perfection of His nature which neither requires nor admits of a change. 1. Why is it that He comes forth and gives us this description of Himself? Why, but to show us that, if He condescends to hold any intercourse with us, the terms of that intercourse must be prescribed entirely by Himself. "You judge" (as if He had said) "of what a fellow-creature may expect from you by his titles; hear My titles—'Jehovah, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.'" What distinction can you add to them? You estimate a mortal's rank by the remoteness of his ancestry—"I am the First, the unoriginated Being." You judge of a mortal's rank by the mansion he inhabits, and, on occasion, you prepare for his reception accordingly. "I dwell in the high and holy place." You can be awed by the presence of even human worth; what, then, should you feel in the presence of Him whose name is Holy—who, if He looks on iniquity, can only look on it to scorch and wither it up? You think of erecting a temple which shall attract the Majesty of heaven by its splendours, as if you should invite a monarch to descend from his

throne by gilding his footstool. On account of His greatness, you would enlarge its dimensions. "But do not I fill heaven and earth?" On account of His grandeur, you would multiply its priests and bedizen them with costly robes. Think of His state and retinue above, where His train filleth the temple, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him! On account of His supremacy, you would multiply His sacrifices. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls," saith God, "or drink the blood of goats?" Multiply them as you will, set all Lebanon in a blaze, and offer up all its herds as a burnt-offering, still He can say, "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Offer up the whole material world, and He could say, "The world is Mine, and the fulness thereof." But because man may have convicted himself of folly in these respects, is he, therefore, to retire mortified and in despair of ever securing the Divine presence? Let us hear what God the Lord will yet say to us. "I dwell . . . with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." What! is the transition from that height to that depth nothing to Him, that He speaks of it in one sentence—in the same breath? "With him also"—as if it made little or no difference to His greatness whether He dwelt there or here! 2. Having thus humbled Himself, we see the reasonableness of His selecting the humble and the contrite as the objects of His Divine regard. It is only such that are prepared to receive Him. As the infinite and eternal Spirit, He comes to commune with our spirit; but in the case of every class except the humble, He finds the ground already occupied, and He has to stand at the door and knock. As the High and Lofty One, He comes to have His supremacy recognized, to receive us at His footstool; but all except the humble are seated on little thrones of their own, and will not come down to receive Him. As the Being whose name is Holy, He comes to imprint on us the likeness of His own image; but none save the humble and those melted in contrition are in a state to receive the sacred impress. He comes to be honoured, appreciated, adored; but all save the humble are busied in asserting their own little claims—are, in effect, prepared to quarrel with His supremacy, and to pluck at His sceptre. Can we wonder, then, that if He comes to commune with us, His abode should be with the humble? Where should goodness dwell but with gratitude? Where should the fulness of the Creator pour itself forth but into the emptiness of the creature? 3. But will He commune even with the contrite? For here the wonder presents itself, that He should condescend even to this. And what part of His conduct towards us is not marked with condescension? And what part of His condescension is not an abyss of wonder? III. FROM THIS IT FOLLOWS, THAT NO RELIGIOUS WORSHIP CAN BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, EXCEPT AS IT HARMONIZES WITH THE CHARACTER OF GOD. Indeed, if this harmony were not necessary—if the individual or the Church could obtain access to God without such harmony with His character, it could not conduce to their real advantage. That in which the happiness of our spiritual nature consists must be something congenial to that nature, and something which is capable of imparting itself to that nature. 1. If supremacy comes here, He expects to behold subordination, and what is that but humility? Humility does not necessarily and of itself imply a sense of guilt. Angels are among the most humble of His creatures, for they never lose sight of their entire dependence on Him. And the greatest example of excellence which earth ever saw, though unstained by a single pollution, could say, "I am meek and lowly of heart." 2. Humility is not enough for man. If they who have never sinned are humble, more than humility must be proper for man—there must be contrition also. The text implies this: it intimates that if the High and Holy One comes amongst us, He expects to be received amidst the sighs of penitence and the tears of godly sorrow. 3. But more—if this voice of mercy is to be heard—if He comes amongst us to address us, He expects that we should tremble at His word—that is, that our hearts should vibrate and respond to every accent He utters. But if the very perfection of His nature makes this correspondence necessary, so also do the wants and the well-being of our nature. Everything in creation trembles and responds to the voice of God but the stony heart of man; and the welfare of everything depends on its power thus to respond. IV. THE SUBJECT INTIMATES THAT ALL HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY, IN THE SERVICE OF GOD, DEPENDS FOR ITS EFFICIENCY ON THE SAME CONDITION—THAT OF HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE CHARACTER. (*J. Harris, D.D.*) *The High and Lofty One* (with chap. lxvi. 1, 2):—I. THE DIVINE MAJESTY. Consider—1. The grandeur of His state. "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool," a throne being an emblem of authority and power. 2. His attributes. II. THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION. 1. The objects of His regard. The qualities which attract His attention belong to the mind and

heart. (1) God dwells not with the wise because of their wisdom—not with the great because of their greatness—not with the rich because of their riches—not with the poor because of their poverty, but with all—whether wise or great, rich or poor—who possess a contrite spirit. (2) Again: those with whom God dwells are the humble. God's grace is at war with pride. (3) Those with whom God dwells cherish a spirit of reverence for His Word. "To that man will I look that trembleth at My Word." There is little doubt that we should tremble at God's word if it were addressed to us by an audible voice. Viewed in whatever light, still the Bible is a wonderful book. But what reverence is due to it as the oracle of truth, as the rule of life, as the lamp which God has kindled to be a light to our path! We reverence this Word when we receive all Scripture as given by inspiration of God, and "thus saith the Lord" settles with us every religious controversy. 2. The expressions of the Divine regard. (1) "To this man will I look," figurative language denoting the interest which God takes in contrite and humble souls, and the complacency with which He regards them. (2) It is added, "With him will I dwell." First of all the question is proposed, "Where is the house that ye will build Me?" My temple is the universe, I inhabit eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place. "Where is the house that ye will build Me?" What a mystery is here, God dwelling by His Spirit in the heart, restoring the reign of holiness, setting up His law, establishing His authority, shedding abroad His gracious influences, filling it with light and peace and love! (3) But He is said to dwell there for a special purpose, "to revive the heart of the contrite ones." There are many things in life to depress and discourage us—some are cast down by adversities, some are harassed by spiritual doubts, some are suffering from a consciousness of sin; and with all such the High and Lofty One dwells. (*H. J. Gamble.*) *The dignity and condescension of God:*—God is set before us—I. IN THE DIGNITY OF HIS CHARACTER. We have—1. His rank as supreme. "The High and Lofty One." 2. His existence as eternal. "That inhabiteth eternity." 3. His nature as unsullied. "Whose name is Holy." And as His name is, so is He. II. HIS WONDERFUL CONDESCENSION. "With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit," etc. 1. Permanence. He "dwells" in the high and holy place; it is His chosen, His special, His fixed abode. When it is, therefore, added, "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit," the same idea is set forth. "If any man love Me," said the Saviour, "he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." 2. Attachment. We may have to do with those for whom we feel no regard; but we would not, if invited, take up our residence with such. When persons dwell together as a matter of free choice, it is evident that there is something to attract them to each other. 3. Communion. 4. Consolation. Where He comes, He comes to bless; and how valuable is the blessing which is here specified—"to revive the spirit of the humble," etc. This He does by the quickening and comforting influences of that Divine Spirit which is promised to all them that believe. III. HIS FATHERLY REBUKES AND CORRECTIONS. 1. Their measure. He whose name is Holy cannot but show His displeasure against sin, whether it be found in the openly rebellious or in His own people. But, in reference to the latter, there are gracious limits within which His righteous anger is restrained. "For I will not contend for ever," etc. (ver. 16). 2. Their cause. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth," etc. (ver. 17). It seems that a covetous spirit pervaded the people of that generation at large. Covetousness is an abominable thing in the sight of God. 3. Their final issue. For a time the chastisements were unavailing, but the people were brought at length to a state of penitence. It is therefore said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him," etc. (ver. 18). IV. THE OFFERS OF HIS LOVE AND MERCY. "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord," etc. (ver. 19). The expression "fruit of the lips" sometimes denotes praise, as when the apostle says, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." But while what is here announced might well excite our warmest gratitude, it is probable that the above phrase is used here in a more general signification. The fruit of the lips is what the lips produce, even words; and those which we have now to consider are pre-eminently gracious words. In reference to this proclamation we notice—1. Its nature. There is a twofold view in which the word "peace" may be regarded. The first is that of good-will, which was the sense in which it was employed in ordinary salutations. But in its more restricted sense it means reconciliation. 2. Its objects. "Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord." The Jews are described as "a people near

unto Him." There are those among ourselves who may be regarded as farther from God and from righteousness than others. To the chief of sinners we are permitted to say, "I bring you good tidings, of great joy." 3. Its efficiency. "And I will heal him." I will make the message effectual. V. HIS FEELINGS TOWARDS HIS INCORRIGIBLE ENEMIES (vers. 20, 21). (*Anon.*) **Eternity.**—*The contemplation of eternity:*—There are some subjects on which it would be good to dwell, if it were only for the sake of that enlargement of mind which is produced by their contemplation. And eternity is one of these, so that you cannot steadily fix the thoughts upon it without being sensible of a peculiar kind of elevation, at the same time that you are humbled by a personal feeling of utter insignificance. You have come in contact with something so immeasurable—beyond the narrow range of our common speculations—that you are exalted by the very conception of it. Now the only way we have of forming any idea of eternity is by going, step by step, up to the largest measures of time we know of, and so ascending, on and on, till we are lost in wonder. We cannot grasp eternity, but we can learn something of it by perceiving that, rise to what portion of time we will, eternity is vaster than the vastest. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Eternity:*—1. Eternity is the most distasteful subject to the natural man. 2. Whether ignored or not its importance remains the same. 3. In eternity there will be some marvellous revelations. 4. The nature of your eternity will be decided at the Cross. It is not the number or the heinousness of your sins that will condemn to hell, nor the beauty or strictness of your morality that will bring to heaven. Eternity will be decided by your relation to a crucified Jesus. (*A. G. Brown.*) *Eternity—definitions:*—"Eternity," saith the puritan, Charnock, "is a perpetual duration which has neither beginning nor end. Time hath both. Those things we say are in time, that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts. Eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state, without any variation. It comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages. It never begins! It endures after every duration of time, and never ceaseth. It doth as much outrun time as it went before the beginning of it. Time supposeth something before it, but there can be nothing before eternity; it were not then eternity. Time hath a continual succession; the former time passeth away, and another succeeds, the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time. As the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity is an infinite immutable duration. Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity." A simpler, but perhaps more striking definition, was that given by one of the pupils of the Deaf and Dumb Institution at Paris, who, in answer to the question, "What is eternity?" replied, "The lifetime of the Almighty." "*Eternal*":—The word "eternal" is the unknown quantity of revelation, transcending present experience, and not to be represented by heaps of ages, or to be defined as endless. It is the timeless state. (*N. Smyth, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–18. **For I will not contend for ever.**—*God's contendings with man:*—I. LET US ADVERT TO THE CONTROVERSY ITSELF—WHAT IT IS, WHY IT IS, AND HOW IT IS CARRIED ON. What this quarrel is we know. It is a part of that ancient strife for mastery, which has been going on ever since the fall, between truth and error, light and darkness, holiness and sin. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Unconverted men may demur to these representations; they tell us that they merely withhold from the Divine Being the homage which He expects and claims; but repugnance, hatred, enmity towards Him, they have none. But do they not hate the law of God? Would they not, if it were in their power, have Him alter the scheme of His entire moral government, His permissions, His requirements? This, speaking after the manner of men, makes God angry—sometimes the contendings of God with man take a judicial form. They are to condemn the sinner out of his own mouth, in that he did not see, in the bitter experiences of a life of evil, how the goodness of God was leading him to repentance. See a form of this contending with us, in that fixed and universal law of our being, which always makes us unhappy, when we are striving with God, when we reject His counsels, or resist His will, or try to get from under His yoke, or wrestle with all the obstructions of His providence, in order to have our own way. But, further, and more directly, God contends with us by His Word, and Spirit, and outward providences—by powerful awakenings at the heart when we look not for them, or by interposed checks and barriers when we are bent on the way of sin. There are restraints upon us often from without.

And there are restraints upon us from within from the suggestions, and the admonitions, and remonstrances of the Divine Spirit in our hearts. But a more comforting view of our text, and one more in harmony with its general spirit, is that which supposes God to be contending with us, avowedly for the purposes of His own Fatherly correction, and only for the fulfilment of those ends; waiting to remove from us His heavy hand. These contendings of God with His own children take many forms. Chastening is a universal discipline. Very hard to bear is this contending of God with us; there is only one thing harder, and that is, the state in which He should not contend with us at all, but should leave us to ourselves. II. THE LIMITS WHICH GOD HAS HIMSELF ASSIGNED TO THIS CONTROVERSY WITH THE SOULS OF MEN, AND THE REASONS MOVING HIM THERETO. Contend with us He must, and be wroth with us He must. It is a necessity forced upon Him by the circumstances of our fallen nature; but He will not contend for ever. Wisdom and goodness have decreed the bounds of this flooding wave and it shall go no farther. Now, in the case of the obstinately wicked and impenitent, we have seen why God will not contend for ever. They have their day of visitation and they outlive it; their accepted time and they sin on. The Judge wastes not scourges upon them; they will make scourges enough for themselves. Hell itself is but Heaven's assisting grace withdrawn, and man left to the evil of his own heart. But in His own children, the limits of God's chastening are merciful limits. "He for our profit"—here is the universal law of the scourge; it will cease whenever our souls' profit ceases. "I will not contend for ever;" nor longer than may be necessary to try our faith, to prove our repentance, to see what there is in our hearts, whether we will keep the Divine commandments or not. These seasons of sadness are sometimes permitted to take us off from a false theology and a false rest. "For the spirit should fail before Me." Very instructive are those Scriptures, and very comforting, which tell us how largely the thought of our mortal frailness enters into the considerate care of Heaven. The uppermost thought which our subject should leave upon the mind, and which the heart should cleave to with all the energies of a loving faith is, that it goes very hard with God to afflict man at all; and that He has in some mysterious sense to wrestle with the conflicting powers of the Godhead before He can give up a soul altogether. It seems as if God could take every step towards the sinner's condemnation but the last. He can admonish, rebuke, threaten; but when it comes to smiting, then comes the hesitation, then begins God's strange work. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Contention ended and grace reigning:*—The Lord is holding high soliloquy. He allows His prophet to stand where he can hear the sacred soliloquy of the great Supreme; and he does hear it, and then under the dictate of the Divine Spirit he records it in the inspired book, where it remains to this day for our instruction. I. GOD CONTENDS WITH MEN, AND THE DIVINE CONTENTION IS WELL DESERVED ON THEIR PART. He says, "I will not contend for ever," in which it is implied that He does contend sometimes. Smiting comes before saving. 1. I would speak of this to the seeking sinner. Anything is better than the horrible calm of the dead sea of spiritual indifference. The Lord's design in contending with you is to convince you of your sin. The next reason for the Lord's contending with you will begin to operate when the first purpose has been accomplished. You will, in your self-abasement, be driven to look to the grace of God. It is hard to part a man from his sin, it is still harder to divorce him from his self-righteousness: and this is a part of the Lord's contention with awakened souls. Moreover, no one can be surprised that the Lord lets forth a measure of His wrath upon seeking sinners when we see how they behave, even while they are seeking. We have known them red hot one day and icy cold another, and albeit that they long for mercy, you will see them at certain seasons acting as if they despised it. 2. But now I turn to the people of God. Sometimes our Lord hath a contention with us. This is not at all wonderful when we consider how unworthily we often live towards His sacred name; indeed, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." His contention with us will show itself occasionally in adverse providences. Even more severe are His blows when it comes to be a controversy carried on by His Spirit within the mind. II. THIS DIVINE CONTENTION WILL COME TO AN END WITH THE CONTRITE. "I will not contend for ever," etc. The question arises: When may we expect that this promise will be fulfilled? Notice the verse which precedes the text, for that assures us that God hath no controversy with the humble and the contrite. This is self-evident, for He declares that with such He will dwell, and the God of grace will not dwell in a house that is full of contention. He contends where He does not abide, but where He abides

there is peace. It is wonderful how the pity of God has in some cases been excited, even by a temporary repentance. When wicked Ahab rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon himself, the Lord took note of it and said, "Seest thou how Ahab humbled himself before Me? Because he humbled himself before Me I will not bring the evil in his days." When the Ninevites repented, though probably there was very little that was spiritual about their humbling, the Lord turned from His fierce anger and there was a reprieve for the wicked city. He has given a promise of grace which runs thus, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." He cannot spurn those who submit themselves before Him, for it is written, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly." Condescension to the lowly is His glory, as the blessed Virgin sang of old, and as many fainting ones may sing at this moment if they will: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree: He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away." Lowly roofs attract the Deity. He comes to those who are broken in heart, and when He comes the contention is over. And what else doth the Lord promise to do? He says He will dwell with the humble, and He adds that He will revive them. III. GOD HIMSELF FINDS REASONS FOR ENDING THE CONTENTION. We could not have found any, for in ourselves there is much cause for the Lord's anger, but none for His grace. 1. The first is found in human weakness, and its inability to bear the Divine contention. 2. His second reason is, to my mind, even more extraordinary. It is given in the next verse: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." This argument is founded on the inoperativeness of the Divine contention upon the heart which is to be won. If wrath will not humble us the Lord may yet in His grace try what love can do. He will love us to a better mind. IV. God Himself having found a reason why He should cease from contention, nay, two reasons, HE HIMSELF INVENTS AND PROPOSES ANOTHER METHOD FOR ENDING HIS CONTENTIONS and making us right with Himself. 1. It is an astonishing method. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." 2. It is an effectual method. "I will heal him,"—not "I will smite him again," but "I will treat his sin as if it were a disease." It is true that sin is much more than a disease, and God might treat us altogether and only from its criminal side, but still it is a disease, and therefore He resolves to treat it as such. 3. It is a tender way. "I will lead him also." 4. Observe, how complete is this method. As if all that went before were not enough, it is added, "I will restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." He will take away the sorrow as well as the sin, the killing grief as well as the killing disease. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 17–19. **For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth.**—*The punishment of backsliders; but their encouragement when penitent:*—These words remind us of the language of the apostle to the Romans: "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." I. THE ACCUSATORY PART. 1. The evil complained of—"The iniquity of his covetousness." Then covetousness is iniquity. So the apostle considered it, or he would not have called it "idolatry." All idolatry is not gross or corporeal. Much of it is refined and mental. It is lamentable to think that this evil so commonly prevails. You will find, by the sacred writers, that the Jews were always given to it. Is it not awful to see how this vice prevails in our country? 2. The reward of transgression. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him." Sin is the same in whomsoever it is found. The evil is not lessened when it is found in the people of God; it is even increased. They stand in nearer relation to God than others. They sin under greater obligations to God than others. They sin against a renewed nature and an enlightened conscience. Hence God is peculiarly angry, "because of the provoking of His sons and of His daughters." Hence He says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you." "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." "Sin never hurts the believer," is an antinomian sentiment: but what saith the Scriptures? Turn back to the history of Moses and Aaron. Turn to the history of David, even when God assured him that his sin was pardoned. How wise, how merciful, are those hidings and those smitings He employs to bring His people to Himself. 3. The perverseness under this. "He went on frowardly in the way of his heart." It is said of Ahaz that, in his affliction, he **sinned yet more and more against the Lord.** So Jeremiah says, "Thou hast stricken

them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." "Do afflictions produce no benefit?" Let us distinguish. There are many who have been afflicted, and yet have not been humbled by the dispensations of Providence, by which they have been exercised. But, you say, "Can this be, in any measure, the case with real Christians? Will they require the rebukes of Divine Providence? Will they go on in the frowardness of their hearts?" Yes, for a while; and, sometimes, for a long while. There is Jonah—he was disobedient to the word of the Lord. 4. Here is God's knowledge of all the ways and works of men. "I have seen his ways." Therefore the speaker is authorized to say, "Be sure your sin will find you out." And now, after all that He has seen, what shall we certainly expect to hear next from Him? I have tried long enough, I have employed means long enough, I will now "avenge Me of My adversaries." But no, "I have seen his ways"—and what ways!—"and will heal him," etc. II. THE PROMISSORY PART. Observe the extensiveness of the engagement. It takes in four things. 1. "I will heal him." All sin is a disease, and it affects the soul much in the same way as affliction affects the body; depriving it of liberty, of enjoyment, of usefulness. It is the same with backsliding. 2. "I will lead him also." Bishop Hall says, "Though God has a large family, not one of them can go alone." And there is none so dull, but He can teach them. 3. "I will restore comforts unto him." 4. "And I will restore comforts unto his mourners,"—for he had made others to mourn as well as himself. This is always the case. The wicked are not only corrupt, but they are "children who are corrupters." But who are they of whom the Prophet here speaks? Not men of the world. They are not his mourners. They rather rejoice. They say, "Ah! so would we have it," instead of grieving over the falls of professors of religion and of the people of God. But "his mourners?" They are his ministers—they who only live when you "stand fast in the Lord." They are the humble believers in Jesus, who are "sorrowful for the solemn assembly," and to whom the reproach of it is a burden. (*W. Jay.*) *A cluster of promises:*—I. HERE ARE PROMISES, REACHING TO THE VERY ROOT OF ALL OUR SINFUL NEED, made to sinners as sinners, nay, to the very worst sinners. 1. The promise of healing. "I will heal him." 2. A promise of leading. The Hebrew is, I will conduct him safely to his own country. 3. "I will restore comforts to him." It is not the singular word, it is not comfort, but "comforts;" all sorts of comforts, and this though I have seen his ways. This is just the language we have in chap. liv. 8–12. 4. There is a fourth promise, "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord;" a liberal promise! to those afar off—aye, far as the ends of the earth—from God, from light, and rest, and truth. II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THESE PROMISES ARE MADE. I said God makes promises to sinners, as sinners; will you observe the persons to whom these promises are made, as God describes them here? (ver. 17.) Covetousness is the root of all sin; covetousness sets up self instead of God in the heart, and everything that ariseth in practice contrary to God and His Word has its root in covetousness—selfism; but here is not merely covetousness, but the "iniquity of covetousness," a state of mind that rests at nothing likely to gratify or minister to self, but will go through hell-fire to get at what it wants. Then, again (ver. 17), God smote, but the soul was no better; it is a terrible aggravation of a sinful state, when the correcting hand of God does not mend it; see what God says (chap. i. 5). Now, says God, "I have seen his ways," obstinate, incorrigible, in sin, and "I will heal him." Such is the divinely gracious way in which peace is proclaimed to him that is afar off. (*M. Rainsford.*) He went on frowardly.—*The deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to adversity:*—1. This sometimes appears by despising afflictions. Many attempt to outbrave calamity, as if they were stronger than God. (1) Those may be said to despise His chastening, who account it a small matter, who from a principle of pride and presumption think it unworthy of them to seem affected with it, or refuse to turn to the hand that smiteth. (2) Again, we despise affliction, if we consider not its origin, which is the corruption of our whole nature by sin. (3) Adversity is also despised, when the subjects of it do not consider the more immediate cause of it, which is the anger of God because of sin, and confess with Moses, the man of God: "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." (4) Further, affliction is despised, if we do not consider the design of it. 2. By repining under adversity. 3. By keeping death at a distance, if the affliction be of a bodily kind. 4. By forming empty resolutions of repentance and reformation, while under affliction. 5. By exciting men to make lies their refuge. The deceitful heart prompts

them to trust in earthly means for deliverance from affliction. 6. By making them despise means. We have seen again and again how the deceitfulness of the heart works by contraries, in its opposition to God. If it prevail not with those under affliction to depend absolutely on means, it will strenuously urge the total neglect of them. 7. By seeking deliverance from the affliction itself, rather than the sanctified use of it. 8. By abusing adversity, as an occasion of hardening itself against God. (*J. Jameson, M.A.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **I have seen his ways, and will heal him.**—*Observing and healing:*—This could only be said of God—He alone can see the ways of man. We have here—I. A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE. Intimate knowledge of the ways of men. "I have seen." God has no need to be told. Tale-bearers exaggerate and lie. God does not even trust His angels. They go about the world observing the evil and the good. But it is not upon their reports He acts. "I know," He says, "their thoughts." "I have seen his ways." How solemnly should the fact impress us! 1. There is the man who makes a profession of religion. But that man knows how within him there exist the root and seeds of evil, that his life is a constant struggle, and sin with all its might is contending for the mastery. The deeper that man's piety is, he realizes with the greater pain his weakness and imperfection, and is horrified at the list which is written up against him by an observing God. 2. Not only the righteous are the subjects of Divine observation, but the wicked as well. The observations of Almighty God produce very different results according to the character of the person He observes. To the man who strives after the way of righteousness it is an encouragement and a warning. But to him who neglects religion and follows sin it is filled with terrible dread and is the precursor of ineffable judgment. II. A DIVINE PROMISE. The humblest efforts after holiness are regarded by the great King, and are noted equally with the failures. He sees the whole—the follies, the weaknesses, the struggles, and the regrets, and He is filled with pity. He knows that unaided man cannot divert his way, and therefore He vouchsafes to give a promise, "I will heal." In this promise we have—1. A manifestation of love. 2. A manifestation of authority, "Will heal." It is God only who can heal man. Application: 1. God will come to those who seek Him. They draw nigh to Him, He draws nigh to them. 2. How joyous is the sound of healing to a sick man! Much more the promise of forgiven sin. 3. Time is passing quickly. What are your ways? Are they such as encourage the Divine advances or repel infinite love? (*Homilist.*) *The Divine Healer:*—I. DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. II. DIVINE MERCY. 1. "I will heal him," "I will lead him also." We all need guidance, as we move on through this wilderness. 2. Another part of the healing is the happiness of mind which Christ bestows upon His reconciled people. "I will heal him and restore comforts unto him. 3. Then, too, will follow praise. "I create the fruit of the lips." The songs of heaven will be begun in your souls, even now upon earth. 4. Peace, settled peace. "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord: and I will heal him." There is in that one word, "peace," a treasury of blessedness which you may forego all else to buy. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *Wonder at God's grace:*—There are a few objects in nature which never cease to astonish the beholder. I think Humboldt said he could never look upon the rolling prairies without astonishment: and I suppose some of us will never be able to look upon the ocean, or to see the sun rise or set, without feeling that we have before us something always fresh and always new. Now, I have been, not only for the love of it, but because of my calling of preaching it, a constant reader of Holy Scripture, and yet after these five-and-twenty years and more I frequently alight upon well-known passages which astonish me as much as ever. As if I had never heard them before, they come upon me, not merely with freshness, but even so as to cause amazement in my soul. This is one of those portions of Scripture. When I read the chapter describing the horrible wickedness of Israel—when I notice the strong terms which inspiration uses, and none of them too strong, to set forth the horrible wickedness of the nation—it staggers me. And then to see mercy following instead of judgment! It overwhelms me! "I have seen his ways, and"—it is not added, "I will destroy him; I will sweep him away," but, "I will heal him." Verily God's grace, like the great mountains, cannot be scaled; like the deeps of the sea, it can never be fathomed, and, like space, it cannot be measured. It is, like God Himself, matchless, boundless. "Oh, the depths! Oh, the depths!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Amazing grace:*—I. The text declares that THE SINNER HAS BEEN OBSERVED OF THE LORD. Notice, 1. That God's omniscience has observed the sinner. Man while living in

rebellion against God is as much under His eye as the bees in a glass hive are under your eye when you stand and watch all their movements. The eye of Jehovah never sleeps—it is never taken off from a single creature He has made. He sees man—sees him everywhere—sees him through and through; so that He not only hears his words, but knows his thoughts—does not merely behold his actions, but weighs his motives, and knows what is in the man as well as that which comes out of the man. God has seen your ways at home, your ways abroad, your ways in the shop, your ways in the bed-chamber, your ways within as well as your ways without—the ways of your judgment, the ways of your hope, the ways of your desire, the ways of your evil lustings, the ways of your murmurings, the ways of your pride. He has seen them all, and seen them perfectly and completely; and the wonder is that, after seeing all, He has not cut us down, but instead of it has proclaimed this amazing word of mercy, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." 2. But God had not only seen their ways in the sense of omniscience, but He had inspected their ways in the sense of judgment. He says, "I was wroth and I hid Myself." Do not think because we preach free grace and dying love to you, and proclaim full pardon through the blood of Jesus, that therefore God winks at sin. No, He is a terrible God, and will by no means spare the guilty. And yet He whom the angels call "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"—the jealous God, the God who revengeth, and is furious against sin—even He has said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." 3. The Lord had tested him. If you read the chapter through you will see that God says He had attempted to reclaim him by chastisements. II. THE SINNER IS THE OBJECT OF DIVINE MERCY TO AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE. 1. Notice how God speaks. "I will, I will." Now, "I will" and "I shall" are for the King; nay, in the highest sense they are only becoming when used by God Himself. It is not for you and me to say "I will"; we shall speak more wisely if we declare that we will if we can. 2. The disease that we suffer from is a disease He knows all about, because the text says, "I have seen his ways." 3. Then the text goes on to say, "I will lead him also." The poor soul of man, even when healed, does not know which way to go. There is not a more bewildered thing in this world than a poor sinner when first he is awakened. Have you ever gone with a candle into a barn where a number of birds have roosted? Have you disturbed them? Have you not seen how they dart hither and thither, and do not know which way to fly? The light confuses them. So it is when Christ comes to poor sinners. They do not know which way to go; they see a little, but the very light confuses them. Now, the loving Lord comes in, and He says, "I will lead him also." 4. "I will restore comforts to him." God begins by knocking our comforts away. He takes away the comfort we once had in our false peace, and He makes us mourn for sin. But after a while He restores comfort to us. What sort of comfort? The comfort of perfect forgiveness, the comfort of complete acceptance. The Father sets a warm kiss upon the child's cheek, and that is the comfort of adoption. Whereas we were heirs of earth, we become heirs of heaven, and have the comforts of hope. We receive the comfort of daily fellowship, for we are admitted to speak with God, and to draw near to Him; the comfort of perfect security, for we are led to feel that whether we live or die we are safe in the arms of Jesus; the comfort of a blessed prospect beyond the grave in the land of the hereafter, where the flowers shall never wither; the comfort of knowing that all things work together for good; the comfort of having the angels for our servants, and heaven for our home. "I will restore comforts to him;" and all this to the man of whom it is said, "Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell." (*Ibid.*) *God sees the sinner*:—In the old time, when the Grecians worshipped images of their gods, it was said that when spiders stretched their webs across the eyelids of the image of Jupiter, the people were regular in their attendance to worship him. They liked to feel that the spiders' webs prevented Jupiter from seeing their sins, and in their poor, feeble way were no doubt grateful to the insects for covering the eyes of a god who, they thought, would punish them for their sins if he could see their ways. (*W. Birch.*) **And restore comforts unto him.**—*Comfort*:—The word "comfort" comes originally from two Latin words, *con* and *fortis*, meaning much strength. In time of trouble, when you lift up your heart and bravely bear the burden, the strength which enables you to do it is called comfort. (*W. Birch.*) *Comforts*:—1. It is a great comfort to have peace of mind. Many people have sought to obtain wealth, hoping it would give peace of mind; but they have been mistaken. But what a comfort it is to those who have obtained it! It flows from the knowledge that our sins are forgiven. 2. Another comfort is that God is with us. 3. What a comfort to know that God is our helper. His fingers are tender, and

His heart is loving as that of a gentle mother. 4. It is a comfort to know that God is our strength in time of temptation. When an engine has to lift a weight which is beyond its usual work, the engineer stands at the steam gauge, and when the finger reaches near the danger point, he cries, "Hold hard; it can do no more!" If he allowed the engine to be pressed beyond the safety point, there might be an accident. Likewise, God knows the gauge of every man's heart. He knows exactly what trials you can bear, and how much temptation you can stand. He declares that no man shall be tempted above that he is able. 5. It is our comfort to know that God is our support in the pathway of our life. 6. Here is another comfort—that our God is the Friend of sinners. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 19. **I create the fruit of the lips.**—*Peace, peace:*—I. THE GRAND SUBJECT OF THE GOSPEL PROCLAMATION. "Peace, peace! saith the Lord." It implies a state of previous enmity and quarrel: a state of alarm and disquietude: and a remedy for both. 1. And does not the message of the Gospel find us in a state of enmity? We are not only "by nature children of wrath," but by voluntary choice we have rebelled against our God. 2. And in a state of alarm and disquietude? II. THE UNLIMITED OFFER OF ITS BENEFITS. "To him that is far off, and to him that is near, Peace, peace, saith the Lord." 1. In respect of outward privileges, the Jewish Church was "near," and all other nations were 'far off.' 2. In respect of moral character, some may be thought nearer to God, some further off; and still no difference is made. 3. In respect of inward experience, again, some may feel discouraged by the idea that others have greater nearness to God than themselves. 4. In respect of local distance, "God is still no respecter of persons." He orders that His Gospel be "preached in all the world." III. THE HOLY CHANGE INVARIABLY CONNECTED WITH THE RECEPTION OF THEM. "I will heal him." (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *The fruit of the lips:*—Our text tells us that God creates the fruit of the lips; but this must be understood, of course, with a reservation. He does not create the fruit of the lips as we commonly see it, but the good fruit, the true fruit, the fruit worth gathering. Because the natural fruit is so evil it needs the Creator again to step in, and make us new creatures, and our fruit new also, or else it will remain so bad that the verdict upon it must be "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And what is that fruit which the Creator produces from a source which is naturally so barren? 1. The sacrifice of thanksgiving (Heb. xiii. 15). The fruit of the lips which God creates should be, above all things, praise. 2. Prayer. 3. Testimony. 4. There is one renowned topic upon which the lips ought always to be able to speak, and that is summed up in the two words, "Peace, peace." From the mouth of truth should come kisses of peace, words of peace, the breath of peace. This is the best lip-salve—"Peace, peace." Nothing can so sweeten the breath as "Peace, peace." Nothing can so flavour the palate and delight the heart as this "Peace, peace," felt within, and breathed without. No teeth of ivory, nor lips of coral, are complete in loveliness till over all there glistens the brightness of peace. Fierce speech becomes not loveliness, and threatening and clamour destroy beauty, but the charm of the lips is peace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Rare fruit:*—We shall employ these words—I. AS THE CRY OF THE AWAKENED. When men are awakened by the grace of God into a consciousness of their true condition they find themselves at war with God and at war with their own consciences, and consequently they begin to cry, "Peace, peace:" longing eagerly to end the dreadful conflict in which they find themselves engaged. Then there visits the man one who knowingly whispers, "You need not disturb yourself. These things are not so. Do you not know that these are all bugbears of a past generation? We men of modern thought have made great discoveries, and changed all the fears of our benighted ancestors into a brave unbelief. You can live at ease. Do not fret yourself about sin, or heaven, or hell, or eternity." Vain are these stale scepticisms, the man is too much in earnest to be drugged with such soporifics. Boastful unbelief has small power over an agonized soul. God Himself has convinced this man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and though he tries to disbelieve he cannot. Mr. Worldly Wiseman calls upon him, with his friend Dr. Legality, and his assistant-surgeon Mr. Civility, and these try their Balm of Conceit and Plaister of Natural Goodness. But if God has been dealing with this man, he will say, "But I am not right. I feel that I deserve the wrath of God, and that goodness is not in me." No, the leprosy lies deep within, and no outward form can cleanse away the deep-seated pollution. II. THIS IS THE ANSWER OF THE SAVIOUR. **It is the fruit of the Saviour's lips.** He comes

to a soul and says, "Peace, peace." Did you ever see Him as dying of sin? If you have never seen Him with the eye of faith you do not know what peace means. But did you ever see Christ as He is risen from the dead? Here is another vision of consolation, another fount of peace. Did you ever see Jesus as He sits there triumphant at the Lord God's right hand? A poor, tried spirit is greatly comforted by that sight. If I were to go on picturing our glorious Lord Jesus Christ in any and all of His relationships to us, we should in each case hear Him say, "Peace, peace." III. AS THE SONG OF THE TRUE BELIEVER. He who has really seen Christ, and placed his trust in Him, can now sing, "Peace, peace, peace." IV. THIS SHOULD BE THE MOTTO OF EVERY BELIEVER. 1. This should be his spirit and desire in the Church, "Peace, peace." 2. We should labour to carry out the same quiet spirit in the family. When you get home do not change "Peace, peace," into scolding and nagging. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." 3. When peace reigns in your own family, go into the world with the same watchword—"Peace, peace." Do not set dogs by the ears, but tame lions and tigers. Compose differences, and make people friends. 4. What a difference there will be when this is taken up among all Christian sects—when there shall be no more envying and strife between this denomination and that, but each one shall be saying in Christ's name, "We are brethren—peace, peace." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 20. **But the wicked are like the troubled sea.**—*The restlessness of sin:*—Who are the wicked? Not only all who think and feel and do the wrong, but all who have not the right spirit within them—supreme sympathy with the supremely good. There are degrees in wickedness as well as in goodness. There are certain things that render it impossible for wicked men to have true repose. What are they? I. DISAPPOINTMENTS. The sinner is doomed to perpetual disappointments. He expects happiness in certain pursuits and objects that cannot according to the constitution of his soul yield him true satisfaction. He reposes trust in objects as frail as the reed and as uncertain as the clouds, and he is doomed to have his plans broken up and his confidence destroyed. Hence he is the subject of perpetual vexations and annoyances, for disappointment is evermore a soul-agitating power; it comes down sometimes upon the heart like a strong south-wester, stirring it to its very depths. II. COMPUNCTIONS. Where there is sin there must come sooner or later remorse. An accusing conscience is not a mere wind that passes over the soul, rippling its surface; it is a volcanic force in its centre, shaking every part. It gave Cain no rest, it made Belshazzar totter and Felix tremble; it drove Judas to the rope. III. SELFISH PASSIONS. Selfishness, which is the essence of wickedness, is the great disturbing force in the moral universe. Avarice, ambition, jealousy, revenge, envy, anger, are some of its fiendish progeny. (*Homilist.*) "*The troubled sea*":—In order that the wicked may understand how far from peace they really are, the prophet points seaward, and bids the people listen to the moaning of the ocean. He bids them hearken to its thunders, as it pounds upon the rock-bound coast, and says eloquently and graphically, "The wicked are like yon troubled sea, for it cannot rest; its waters cast up mire and dirt." I. THE RESTLESSNESS OF THE OCEAN IS AN EMBLEM OF THE WICKED. 1. The sea is never still. We have, indeed, beheld it "like a millpond," as we say; its surface so glassy and mirror-like that some would conclude that it was perfectly still. The sails, and masts, and hull of the ship were reflected in its glassy bosom. Yet even then the deep was not perfectly still. There was a solemn heave about it, as the flapping of the sails and the rolling of the yards plainly revealed. Moreover, even if the swell could have altogether subsided, the sea was not still for all that. There were currents, imperceptible save when the log was heaved and the reckoning taken, that bore the ship silently along. Furthermore, even if it were possible to get into a place where there were neither swell nor currents, the tides are everywhere uplifting and depressing the vessel at regular intervals to high or low watermark. The sea, therefore, is perhaps one of the best emblems of restlessness, for it has several motions and movements, even in its serenest moods. But it is not to the sea in a state of calm, but when it is lashed to foam, that the prophet compares the wicked. There is to them no permanent enjoyment: their pleasures are fleeting: they have no real rest of heart. Uncomfortable thoughts and painful prickings of conscience come when they are least welcome. Conscience is ill at ease, fear of death and of judgment can by no means be altogether set aside. Those who have been converted to God after a life of dissipation and a career of sin have honestly confessed that though there was a

certain sort of pleasure in the ways of wickedness, there was meanwhile a strange unrest. Like Marcellus, the Roman general, of whom it is said that whether conqueror or conquered he was still dissatisfied, they were never content. The reference here is principally to the fierce passions that are in every human breast. In the breast of the saint they are restrained by the power of the reigning Christ, but in the life of the wicked they remain uncurbed, unbridled, let loose upon the world. 2. How readily the sea is stirred! At one moment it is comparatively calm, the surface smooth and glistening, but presently the accustomed eye notices in the distance the cat's paw of the wind—a little ruffling of the surface in quite a circumscribed area. But the puffs become frequent and grow in force; the ripples become wavelets, and the wavelets waves; the waves soon rise to billows, and by and by the sea runs mountains high. It is identically the same with the wicked. Howsoever gently the Prince of the power of the air blows upon them at first, all too soon the angry passions rear and rage and roar. Pride and envy, lust and covetousness, ambition, malice, revenge, all these, little in their beginnings, grow in size and increase in number until they become adulteries, murders, blasphemies, and the like. 3. To what an awful pitch the agitation of the sea can attain. Oh, the dreadful length to which wickedness is carried! 4. How long, also, the agitation of the sea remains. Some seas, indeed, are always rough. They never know repose. Off some headlands the waves run mountains high at all seasons of the year, but in other places the storm that rises so readily takes long to subside. I have encountered the after-swell of a storm that must have raged some days before; long after the hurricane had blown itself out our vessel came into the region where its tracks remained. We crossed the pathway of the storm, though we were fortunate enough to miss the tempest itself. Oh, how long the agitation of sin remains. With some, indeed, there is a temporary lull, an attempt at reformation, more or less successful. Sometimes a man will curb his passions with philosophy, or become suddenly impressed that for his own reputation's sake he must hold himself in check, but he has scarcely done so ere Satan raises another vehement wind and begins to arouse his passions in a different direction. I have known sinners get into just such a case that they have overcome this temptation; they have managed, by sheer force of character and strength of purpose, to restrain certain unholy passions, and then the devil, fearing that he may miss his hold of them, raises another wind, in a contrary direction; and the remains of the previous storm come clashing with the beginnings of a new one, and the poor sinner is likely to be swamped betwixt the twain. 5. What a mighty noise the sea makes when it is troubled. There is a pleasant murmur with it in the time of calm, but when the winds of heaven begin to play upon it it thunders as it rolls and breaks on the beach, and hisses as it surges on the shore. Behold here another emblem of sin and of sinners. The wicked seem to delight in making loud proclamation of their sin. 6. When the sea is troubled it works havoc on every hand. Thus do the wicked work destruction in our midst. Alas! for those who are the prey of their passions. The great, the learned, the aged are not spared. Huge liners founder in the gale. Alas! that wicked men are constantly compassing the destruction of the smaller ships; and the children of our families and our schools are wrecked while yet their years are few. Moreover, wickedness is so insidious that some who have thought to rescue men from sin have been themselves engulfed by it. They had it in their hearts to be as lifeboats to them, but they themselves have gone down too. Law and order, like great cliffs and granite walls, have been torn down by the grasping hands of iniquity, while proprieties and decencies which one would have thought that even sinners would observe, have been levelled or overridden by men who ran to an excess of riot. II. THE SEA IS AN EMBLEM OF WICKED MEN BECAUSE OF THE DÉBRIS THAT IT CASTS UP. The *ejecta* of the sea is, in God's esteem, a fit image of the outcome of wicked men's hearts. When the storm has subsided you will find a good deal of objectionable matter littering the beach—the vomit of the sea. How apt an emblem of that which the Christless heart produces! What evil deeds the unregenerate heart is capable of! And what shall we say about the words of wicked men? What shall the end be? Is the storm evermore to last? I see no cure for all this unless the Lord speaks peace. "Oh, where is He that trod the sea?" He is on the mountain top; He is on His high and holy hill. It is dark, and Jesus has not yet come to us, but He has not forgotten us. Thrice happy day when the Christ of Galilee says, "Peace, be still," to a sin-stirred world! (*T. Spurgeon.*) *Bad men and good: a contrast:*—What a contrast with the calm of God's "holy mountain" (ver. 13), high above all sublunary storms. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.**—*The standard of righteousness maintained:*—The fifty-seventh chapter ends with a declaration which shows that amid all the goodness and graciousness of the Divine way the standard of righteousness is never lowered: never is the dignity of law impaired. Read these awful yet gracious words: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." If we thought that God was about to lose righteousness in sentiment, we are thus suddenly, with a very startling abruptness, brought back to the remembrance of the fact that wickedness is infinitely and eternally hateful to God, and that peace and wickedness are mutually destructive terms. The wicked man may create a wilderness and call it peace, but real contentment, benignity, resignation, or harmony, he can never know in wickedness. Herein we find the testimony of the Divine presence, the assertion and glory of the Divine law. God does not take away peace from the wicked in any arbitrary sense. Wickedness is itself incompatible with peace: the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. The unrest is actually in the wickedness; the tumult does not come from without, it comes from within. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The character and misery of the wicked:*—I. WHO COME UNDER THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WICKED? In general, all who have never undergone a change of heart. 1. Some are grossly ignorant of the plain and essential doctrines of the Christian religion, amidst the best means to gain an acquaintance with them. 2. Some break out into open acts of wickedness. 3. Others, though free from gross immoralities, are yet wicked, because they neglect the duties of religion. There are sins of commission, and there are sins of omission. 4. There are some who adopt loose and dangerous principles, who allege, either that the Scripture is not true, or that the great doctrines, as generally taught, are not contained in it. 5. Among the wicked we must also rank the formalist and hypocrite. 6. They are impatient of restraint and reproof. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS THERE IS NO PEACE TO SUCH. 1. There is no peace to them with God. By their wickedness they wage war with Heaven, and the almighty King is angry with them every day. 2. There is no peace in their own conscience. 3. There is no peace to the wicked in a dying hour. By this is not meant that they shall undergo more pain of body than others. The pangs of dissolution are the same to all. Those, indeed, of whom the world was not worthy, have often suffered the most cruel and violent deaths. Nor is it meant that the wicked have never any composure in death, or hope of well-being hereafter. Some of them die as they have lived, stupid and thoughtless as beasts. Some good men may have fears and perplexities to the very last; and some bad men may remain unshaken, and die with more apparent confidence than the others. The fears of the good man cannot render his state less safe, nor the confidence of the bad render his less dangerous. Whatever their own sentiments are, it shall be "well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked." What awful spectacles have some of the wicked exhibited on a death-bed! 4. There is no peace to the wicked after death. They enjoyed with others the common bounties of Providence, and were sensible of pleasure. In these they placed their only happiness; but now all is gone, and they are tormented. Conscience can be quieted no more. (*W. Linn, D.D.*) *No comfort for the wicked:*—The wicked would not be healed by the grace of God, and therefore shall not be healed by His comforts. (*M. Henry.*) *No peace to the wicked:*—1. The man who lives in a habitual course of sinning has no real comfort of mind from the pleasures of this world. 2. He must necessarily want all effectual support under the many evils and calamities of life. 3. He cannot but be sometimes troubled with the reproofs of his conscience. 4. He can never get rid of all the unwelcome thoughts of death, and of what is to be his portion in a future state. (*Bishop Pearce.*) *No peace to the wicked:*—I. WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED? "The wicked." This description includes the outwardly immoral and profane—those who seem lost to every principle of virtue and religion—who have not the fear of God before their eyes—and who are equally indifferent to the censure and approbation of their fellow-creatures. But the words of the text are applicable to all those whose hearts have not been renewed by the Holy Spirit. II. THE AFFECTING DECLARATION RESPECTING SUCH CHARACTERS. "There is no peace," etc. 1. They cannot, while in this state, enjoy peace with God. Peace includes in it mutual reconciliation and agreement. 2. The wicked cannot enjoy peace with themselves. As the favour and presence of God are the only sources of real happiness, a state of enmity and separation from Him must be attended with misery. Subjection to His authority, and conformity to His will and image, promotes peace and order, but where these do not exist, there must be confusion and discord. The unruly passions will then agitate and distress the mind; pride,

and envy, and hatred, and other unholy affections will struggle for the ascendency. Having no principle to check or govern them, they will increase in violence and hurry their possessor onward in the path of sin and danger. Conscience will also exert its influence to alarm and terrify them. In vain do the wicked seek peace of conscience by partial reformation or by the performance of outward duties. The accusations of a guilty conscience can be silenced only by an application to the blood of sprinkling. 3. There is no peace to the wicked in the world. Alienation from God necessarily leads to strife among men. It excites those corrupt passions and principles which render man the enemy of his fellow-man, as well as the source of misery to himself. 4. The wicked have no peace under the various afflictions of life. In the season of worldly prosperity, they may appear to others peaceful and happy, but no sooner does adversity come upon them, than we see the transient and unsubstantial nature of their enjoyment. 5. There is no peace to the wicked in the hour of death. 6. There is no peace to the wicked through eternity. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Wickedness an obstruction to social peace and happiness:*—In order to the proving of this, I shall insist on these three arguments—I. THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF WICKEDNESS. II. THE CONSIDERATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE, AND HIS RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. III. THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL AGES. (*B. Calamy, D.D.*) *No peace to the wicked:*—I. A POSITIVE ASSERTION, an unlimited proposition, "There is no peace to the wicked." II. *The authority upon which the proposition is established*, even the testimony of God Himself, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (*J. Lambe.*) *The dismal reflections of the unbelieving mind:*—It is said of the infidel Hobbes, "that though he would speak very strange and unbecoming things of God, yet in his study in the dark, and in his retired thoughts, he trembled before Him. If his candle happened to go out in the night, he awoke in terror and amazement. He was unable to bear the dismal reflections of his dark and desolate mind; and knew not how to extinguish, nor how to bear the light of the candle of the Lord within him." Mr. False Peace, so John Bunyan has it in his "Holy War," was the son of Mr. Flatterer, and his mother's name before she was married was Mrs. Sooth-up. He liked to be called Mr. Peace, but there were witnesses enough to prove that time was when he delighted to boast that his real name was not Peace, but False Peace. "There is no peace (except false peace), saith my God, to the wicked." (*T. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER LVIII.

VERS. 1–4. Cry aloud, spare not.—"*Cry aloud*":—"Cry with the throat." Crying with the throat or from the lungs is here opposed to a simple motion of the lips and tongue (1 Sam. i. 13). The common version, "Cry aloud," is therefore substantially correct, though somewhat vague. The LXX in like manner paraphrases it ἐν ἰσχύϊ. J. D. Michaelis reads, "as loud as thou canst." The positive command is enforced by the negative one, "spare not," as in chap. liv. 2. The loudness of the call is intended to suggest the importance of the subject, and, perhaps, the insensibility of those to be convinced. The prophet here seems to turn away from avowed apostates to hypocritical professors of the truth. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Conviction before comfort:*—When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, He added, "When He is come, He shall convince;" for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort doth not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort His people (chap. xl. 1); here He appoints him to convince them, and show them their sins. (*M. Henry.*) *The minister must be faithful:*—He must be vehement and in good earnest, must cry aloud, and not spare. Not spare them, nor touch them with his reproofs as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound to the bottom; lay it bare to the bone; not spare himself, or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can. Though he spend his strength, and waste his spirits; though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill-name; yet he must not spare. The trumpet doth not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible. So must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin (Ezek. xxxiii. 3, 4). (*Ibid.*) *National sins protested against:*—

I. TESTIFY AGAINST SOME OF THE PREVAILING SINS AND CRYING ABOMINATIONS OF THIS LAND. 1. Pride. 2. Luxury. 3. Pleasure. 4. Gluttony. 5. Drunkenness. 6. Swearing. 7. Sabbath-breaking. 8. Lying. 9. Avarice. 10. Adultery and fornication. 11. Profane contempt of holy things. 12. The evil passions which agitate the bosoms of men, and which receive the sanction of a large portion of the community—not as casual evils, but as principles of action, and tests of what is called highmindedness and honour. Some of the most prevailing of these, when stripped of their specious coverings, and exhibited in their proper character, are—ambition, envy, malice, and revenge. 13. Flagrant insincerity, and wicked abuse of professed acts of public worship. 14. Hardened impenitence. II. URGE WITH FAITHFULNESS AND IMPARTIALITY THE SENTENCE OF GOD DENOUNCED UPON EACH. (*R. Shittler.*) *Selfish piety* is the popular piety of this age and land. I. IT IS VERY EARNEST. The piety of Israel at this time seems to have been anything but a dull and inactive power; it was very busy. 1. It was earnest in study. "They seek Me daily," etc. (ver. 2). 2. It is earnest in prayer. "They ask of Me the ordinances of justice," etc. 3. It is earnest in its self-sacrifice. It endures fastings and self-mortifications (ver. 3). 4. It is earnest in its churchism. "Ye fast for strife and debate," etc. It would seem that the Israelites were divided into religious parties or factions, some professing to be more orthodox than others. There was a rivalry, therefore, in their devotion; one tried to excel the other, and the competition ran so high that they began to "smite each other with the fist." 5. It is earnest in its professions. They made "their voice to be heard on high." II. IT IS TERRIBLY REPREHENSIBLE. The prophet is here called upon to "Cry aloud, spare not," etc. 1. It is an insult to God. "He abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found." This selfish piety is the most abhorrent of all impieties. 2. It is pernicious to souls. This selfish piety inflicts incalculable injury upon its possessor: it warps the judgment, it deadens the conscience, it awakens false hopes, generates diseased affections and dehumanizes the man. Nor is the injury confined to the possessor himself. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **Yet they seek Me daily.**—*Hypocritical religion:*—When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions, they pleaded they could see no transgressions they were guilty of; for they were diligent in attending God's worship, and what more would he have of them? Now, 1. He owns the matter of fact to be true. As far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it; let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have the form of godliness. (1) They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer. "They seek Me daily." (2) They love to hear good preaching. "They delight to know My ways," as Herod, who heard John gladly, and the stony ground, that received the seed of the Word with joy; it is to them as a lovely song (Ezek. xxxiii. 32). (3) They seem to take a great pleasure in the exercises of religion, and to be in their element when they are at their devotions. "They delight in approaching to God," not for His sake to whom they approach, but for the sake of some pleasing circumstance—the company or the festival. (4) They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it. "They ask of Me the ordinances of justice," the rules of piety in the worship of God, the rules of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of justice. (5) They appear to the eyes of the world as if they made conscience of doing their duty. They are "as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God." But, 2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it. Show them their sins that they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it. (*M. Henry.*) *Religious, but unsaved:*—Men may go a great way towards heaven, and yet come short; nay, may go to hell with a good reputation. (*Ibid.*) *Two great problems:*—The prophet and the world may be considered as engaged in two opposite problems. The problem which the world is ever seeking to discover is to find out what is the least religion they may have, and yet be saved; the problem which the prophet is here endeavouring to solve, is what is the most religion you may have, and yet be lost. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Forms of religion:*—There are four distinct forms of Gospel service, all of which, if accompanied by right affections towards God, afford just and scriptural evidence of an accepted or reconciled state. These four forms of service are—the habit of daily prayer, a love for the preached Word, an open profession of Christ, and an apparent earnestness in inquiring after the ways and will of God. These, however, are not in themselves

decisive tests of spiritual character; causes may operate to induce these outward observances, wholly distinct from the love of God in its governing and ruling power. Education may prompt a man to acts of daily worship; by local sympathies, or by the power of fashion, a man may be induced to make a religious profession; and he may with much apparent earnestness be inquiring which is the way to life eternal, when he has a secret mental reservation to keep the joys, the comforts, and the forbidden delights of the present world. (*Ibid.*) *Formalism*:—I. WHY MEN GO SO FAR. 1. It is a sentiment of moral uneasiness which makes the formalist of every grade and character. 2. But in estimating the causes which induce men to go certain lengths in a religious life, we should not entirely omit the expectation of a considerable degree of credit in the world; a secret pride at being numbered among the people of God—an indefinite notion of outward prosperity as usually following on a bold religious profession. II. WHY IT IS THAT THEY WILL NOT GO FURTHER. For this I shall assign two reasons. 1. Defective knowledge—an imperfect acquaintance with the way of salvation. Men know not the end of Christ's work, they know not the jealousy with which He regards any interference with that work. 2. Defective obedience—they stop short of some form of Gospel requirement with which they should comply. III. APPLY SOME TESTS OF SPIRITUAL SINCERITY. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3–7. **Wherefore have we fasted?**—*Fasts* were a common feature of the old Israelitish religion (1 Kings xxi. 9, 12; Jer. xxxvi. 9). In Zech. viii. 19 we learn expressly that during the exile four days were observed annually as fasts, in commemoration of dates connected with the fall of Jerusalem. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Fasting*:—I. CONSIDER IN GENERAL THE DUTY OF FASTING, ITS NATURE, ENDS AND USES. As to the meaning of the word, fasting is only an abstinence from food. Whether this abstinence should be total or partial, and how long it should be continued, cannot be determined by any general rule that can reach all persons; but the constitutions and strength of particular persons must be considered, and such abstinence used by them respectively as will best answer in each the ends and uses of fasting. We are not to look upon fasting in itself as a thing that recommends us to God. But there are good ends for which fasting is appointed, and which are promoted by it, that make it acceptable to God: regard, therefore, must ever be had to those ends, and such measures taken as may be most conducive to them, and they are chiefly these—1. For subduing and mortifying the sinful appetites of the body. 2. For the better disposing the mind to prayer and other spiritual exercises. The corruptible body is too apt to press down the immortal soul. 3. For the testifying our shame and sorrow; our anger at ourselves for our sins. We have God's express command for it to His people the Jews. The prophet Joel frequently and earnestly presses them to this duty. Holy men of old practised it, as we find in the instances of Ezra, David, Daniel, etc. And that we may not think this to be such a Jewish rite, as concerned only those that lived under their dispensation, we read that when the prophet Jonah denounced God's judgment against Nineveh, those Gentiles proclaimed a fast, and observed it universally from the greatest to the least. And to put this matter out of all doubt, the blessed Author of our holy religion, in His Sermon on the Mount, though He does not directly command fasting, yet supposes it a duty to be practised by Christians, gives directions for the right performance of it, and upon such a performance assures us of a blessing from our Father in heaven. II. REFLECT UPON THOSE FAULTS OF THE JEWS RECORDED IN MY TEXT, WHICH MADE THEIR FASTS UNACCEPTABLE TO GOD. 1. Though they used great outward austerity, and severe discipline towards the body, there was no inward change. 2. Their divisions and contentions. "Ye fast for strife and debate," etc. 3. Their want of compassion and charity to those that were in affliction (ver. 7). A like thread of hypocrisy ran through their fasts, and prayers, and alms, and all their services in our Saviour's time. III. INQUIRE WHETHER WE OF THIS NATION ARE NOT JUSTLY CHARGEABLE WITH THE SAME SINS WHICH THEY COMMITTED, and so severely smarted for; and whether we have not too much reason to fear that God may expostulate with us about our public fasts, as He did with them, "Are they such fasts as I have chosen?" IV. PRESS YOU TO THE PRACTICE OF SUCH THINGS AS MAY MAKE THIS DAY OF HUMILIATION AN ACCEPTABLE DAY UNTO THE LORD. And what can do this but our careful avoiding those sins which the Jews are here reproved for, and practising their contrary duties? 1. We must be sure to avoid that foolish and provoking sin of hypocrisy. 2. Also all strife and division. 3. Let us take heed of unmercifulness and hard-heartedness to those that are in want and misery; for, with what face can we ask, with what reason can we expect from God,

supplies for our wants, or succour in our distress, if we refuse such help as we can give to our poor brethren in their affliction? (*Bp. Talbot.*) *Incipient Pharisaism:*—There is an incipient Pharisaism in their evident expectation that by external works of righteousness they would hasten the coming of the Messianic salvation. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Ye fast for strife:*—J. D. Michaelis tells a story of a lady who was never known to scold her servants so severely as on fast days, which he says agrees well with physiological principles and facts! (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Vers. 5–9. **Is it such a fast that I have chosen?**—*The fast which God has chosen:*—I. GOD'S PURPOSE IN COMMANDING MEN TO FAST. 1. To lead us to prayer (ver. 4), prayer so real that our voices are "heard on high," that God will hear and answer. 2. To aid us in realizing communion with Him (ver. 9); that His voice be heard by us as truly as ours by Him; our voice to Him (ver. 8), His to us. 3. To aid in repressing self in all its forms. In John iii. 30, we have the general principle, also in Phil. ii. 3. II. THE NATURE OR CHARACTER OF TRUE ABSTINENCE. 1. To loose our bands (Luke xiii. 16), "whom Satan hath bound" (Luke xi. 21, 22; Matt. v. 29, 30). 2. To undo our burdens (Ps. lv. 22; Matt. xi. 28–30). 3. To break every yoke, every habit that enslaves (Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 12–18). "I will not be brought under the power of any." 4. To bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit (Gal. v. 17). III. THE EFFECT OF TRUE ABSTINENCE. 1. "Then" thy light shall break forth like morning (Phil. ii. 15, 16; Matt. v. 16). 2. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee" as a leader to higher grace and glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). 3. Thy prayer shall be heard (ver. 9). 4. There shall be light from on high, and His guidance for ever (ver. 10; Ps. xxxii. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 14). Conclusion: To keep this season properly, we must be ourselves "free" as new creatures in Him. We must act habitually in the spirit of freedom (Gal. v. 1). We must do what in us lies to make others free (Numb. x. 29). (*H. Linton, M.A.*) *Philanthropic piety:*—In these verses you have the religious instinct working, not through selfishness, but through love, not in formal religious devotions, but in earnest philanthropic services. I. ITS RITUAL IS PHILANTHROPIC SERVICE. "Pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the widow and fatherless," etc. II. ITS INFLUENCE IS GLORIOUSLY BENEFICENT. What is it? "Light." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." Prosperity will come on them as the genial dawning of a long and blessed day. "Health." "Thine health shall spring forth speedily." All weakness and disease will depart, and healthful vigour will come into the soul. "Righteousness." "Thy righteousness shall go before thee." The eternal law of rectitude—not expediency, not caprice, not passion, not morbid sentiment, will guide the footsteps as a leader through the winding path of life." "Glory." "The glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward" (margin, "shall gather thee up, that ye shall bring up the rear"). III. ITS SPIRIT IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. "Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am." The idea is that if men would only be real in their religion, show their love to Him by labouring earnestly for the good of suffering humanity, then He would respond to their prayers, and grant them their request. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Is not this the fast that I have chosen?**—*Practical fasting:*—In reply to the question, how the acts here mentioned could be described as fasting, J. D. Michaelis says that they are all to be considered as involving acts of conscientious self-denial, which he illustrates by the case of an American slaveholder brought by stress of conscience to emancipate his slaves. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Oppression:*—People may be oppressed in their reputation by unmerited reproaches. (*R. Macculloch.*) *A foretokening of Gospel morality:*—This passage is one of those in which the holiness peculiar to the Gospel seems to be foretokened in the morality of the prophetic canon. The twilight clouds were red with the coming Sun. 1. Isaiah and his brother-prophets were holier and heavenlier and richer in the works of love upon an anticipated Christ than we are in a Christ already our crucified Example. These men of God knew no divorce between belief and love, between living perpetually in the presence of a benevolent Lord and imitating His benevolence to their fellow-creatures. As it is the spirit of truth that has solemnized the union of the principle of faith with the works of charity, so it is, and in all ages has been, the master policy of the spirit of evil to effect their separation. 2. The whole religious providence towards man in every age has been a system operating by the combined influence of faith and love—both directed

towards His own perfect essence. In our existing condition, what is faith but love relying on support? What is love but faith forgetting the support in the Supporter? Every progressive step in attaining habits of compassion and kindness upon earth must necessarily be a step towards estimating and loving Him who is the essential Spirit of benevolence. The love of man is the type and shadow of the love of God. The people of God are here engaged with the rudiments and images of those affections which are to be the duty and happiness of their eternity. (*W. Archer Butler.*)

Ver. 7. **Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry?**—*Almsgiving:*—Why there are so many evils in the world is a question that has been agitated ever since man felt them. It becomes not us, with too presumptuous a curiosity, to assign the causes of the Divine conduct, or, with too daring a hand, to draw aside the veil which covers the councils of the Almighty. But from this state of things we see many good effects arise. The enjoyments of life are grafted upon its wants; from natural evil arises moral good, and the sufferings of some contribute to the happiness of all. Such being the state of human affairs, charity, or that disposition which leads us to supply the wants, and alleviate the sufferings, of unhappy men, as well as bear with their infirmities, must be a duty of capital importance. Accordingly, it is enjoined in our holy religion as being the chief of the virtues. It is assigned as the test and criterion by which we are to distinguish the disciples of Jesus, and it will be selected at the great day as being that part of the character which is most decisive of the life, and according to which the last sentence is to turn. Charity, in its most comprehensive sense, signifies that disposition of mind which, from a regard and gratitude to God, leads to do all the good in our power to man. But all that I intend at present is, to consider that branch of charity which is called almsgiving. I. WHAT IS THE MOST PROPER METHOD OF BESTOWING CHARITY. 1. The best method of bestowing charity upon the healthy and strong is to give them employment. One half of the vices of men take their origin from idleness. To support the indolent, therefore, to keep those idle who are able to work, is acting contrary to the intention of God; is doing an injury to society, which claims a right to the services of all its members; is defrauding real objects of charity of that which is their proper due, and is fostering a race of sluggards to prey upon the vitals of a State. But he is a valuable member of society, and merits well of mankind, who, by devising means of employment for the industrious, delivers the public from a useless incumbrance, and makes those who would otherwise be the pests of society, useful subjects of the Commonwealth. 2. Another act of charity, of equal importance, is to supply the wants of the really indigent and necessitous. If the industrious, with all their efforts, are not able to earn a competent livelihood; if the produce of their labour be not proportionable to the demands of a numerous family; then they are proper objects of your charity. 3. Another class of men that demand our charity is the aged and feeble, who, after a life of hard labour, are grown unfit for further business, and who add poverty to the other miseries of old age. 4. Children also bereft of their parents, orphans cast upon the care of Providence, are signal objects of compassion. 5. But there is a class of the unfortunate who are the greatest objects of all; those who, after having been accustomed to ease and plenty, are by some unavoidable reverse of fortune condemned to bear, what they are least able to bear, the galling load of poverty; who, after having been perhaps fathers to the fatherless in the day of their prosperity, are now become the objects of that charity which they were wont so liberally to dispense. II. EXHORTATIONS TO THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY. This duty is so agreeable to the common notions of mankind, that every one condemns the mean and sordid spirit of that wretch whom God has blessed with abundance, and consequently with the power of blessing others, and who is yet relentless to the cries of the poor and miserable. The practice of this duty is incumbent upon all. 1. To the performance of it you are drawn by that pity and compassion which are implanted in the heart. 2. Consider the pleasure derived from benevolence. (*J. Logan, F.R.S.*) *Dealing bread to the hungry:*—Thine "own bread" it must be, and that especially whereof thou hast on the fast-day abridged thyself; for what the rich spare on such a day the poor should spend. Hereby, 1. Men's prayers shall speed the better (Acts x. 4). 2. They shall make God their debtor (Prov. xix. 17). 3. That is best and most pleasing alms to God that is given in Church assemblies; for, (1) it is an ordinance of God, and a Sabbath duty (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2); (2) Christ there sitteth, and seeth the gift and mind of every almsgiver (Luke xxi. 1, 2), setting it down in

His book of remembrance (Mal. iii. 16). (*J. Trapp.*) "*To break bread,*" meaning to distribute, from the Oriental practice of baking bread in thin flat cakes. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Breaking bread to the hungry:*—Not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but break bread on purpose for them; give them loaves and do not put them off with scraps. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 8–14. **Then shall thy light break forth.**—*The secret of prosperity to nations, churches, and men* (vers. 8, 9, 10, 14, "Then," "then," "then," "then"):—I. MEN AND CHURCHES CHARGE GOD FOOLISHLY, AND COMPLAIN WITHOUT CAUSE OF THEIR OWN LOW ESTATE. II. GOD REBUTS THEIR BLASPHEMOUS CHARGE, AND ASSERTS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS DEALINGS IN AN APPEAL TO THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES AND COMMON-SENSE. III. GOD RETURNS THE CHARGE AGAINST HIMSELF ON THE SINNERS' OWN HEADS, AND REVEALS HIS SECRET, IF MEN WILL HAVE EARS TO HEAR. "Then" is the secret of light and darkness; of health and sickness, or want of spiritual vigour and vitality; of covenant righteousness in the enjoyment of covenant blessings, or apparent breach of covenant in the withholding of what is good; of glory, such as that of Israel in the wilderness, when the glory of the Lord was "their rereward," when the pillar of cloud and fire was in the midst of them by day and night, or shame, as when the ark was in the hands of the Philistines, or the Assyrian or Babylonian invaded God's heritage and profaned His temple; of prayers answered, or unanswered; of God's presence manifested in undeniable tokens, or denied, undiscerned, apparently withdrawn; of power to be God's witnesses and workmen in doing good to others, or impotence, conscious inability to be fellow-labourers with God and for God, want of spiritual life and energy. "Then" is the secret—then, and not till then—then, and not otherwise—then certainly—then according to the promise of the covenant, and in the way of the covenant and kingdom. In further application of the text to ourselves learn such lessons as the following—1. The salvation of the Gospel is salvation from sin itself. 2. In the Gospel, accordingly, blessedness and righteousness go together, and so also sin and misery. 3. There is under the Gospel no substitute for repentance. 4. Man, in all the work of salvation, from beginning to end, must co-operate with God. (*R. Paisley.*) *God the rewarder:*—If a person, a family, a people be thus disposed to everything that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful rewarder. 1. God shall surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night (vers. 8, 10). They that are cheerful in doing good, God will make them cheerful in enjoying good. They that have showed mercy shall find mercy. Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help them when it is their turn. 2. God will put honour upon them. Good works shall be recompensed with a good name. This is included in that light which riseth out of obscurity. 3. They shall always be safe under the Divine protection. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee," as the vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front; and "the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward," the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear. 4. God will be always nigh unto them to hear their prayers (ver. 9). As, on the one hand, "he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor shall himself cry and God will not hear him," so, on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up, with his alms, for a memorial before God (Acts x. 4). 5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases (ver. 11). 6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds (ver. 11). 7. They and their families shall be public blessings (ver. 12). (*M. Henry.*) "*Break forth as the dawn*":—"Break forth" is the verb used in chap. xxxv. 6; Gen. vii. 11; Ps. lxxiv. 15, of the bursting of waters through a fissure in the earth's surface; by a vivid metaphor the dawn was conceived as "splitting" the heavens and flooding the world with light. The same word occurs on the Moabite Stone in the phrase "from the splitting of the dawn." (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) **Thine health shall spring forth speedily.**—*A healthy Church:*—I. ESSENTIALS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH. 1. A Scriptural constitution. 2. Nutritious food. 3. Pure air. 4. Regular exercise. II. CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH. 1. Health is sometimes known by outward appearances. The rosy cheeks, the sparkling eyes, the sonorous voice, all testify to health. A healthy Church may be known by its prayer-meetings, contributions, missionary spirit, etc. 2. Health is known by tastes. A sickly man's taste is bad. Unwholesome dainties are preferred to strong meat. So with regard to an unhealthy Church. Silly anecdotes

are preferred to good scriptural teaching. Thinks much of forms and ceremonies. 3. Contentment of mind. An unhealthy man is querulous and difficult to please. So an unhealthy Church. It is a fault-finding Church. 4. Work. Sickness disables a man for labour. Health stimulates to work. A healthy Church may be known by its labour. III. THE DESIRABILITY OF A HEALTHY CHURCH. A healthy Church—1. Is one of great comfort to itself. 2. Will survive through many trials. The healthy man is heedless of east winds, etc. So a healthy Church survives persecutions, etc. 3. Is attractive. People shun unhealthy Churches as they do fever dens. 4. Is one likely to live. Lessons: 1. A morally sick Church is a great curse to a neighbourhood. 2. The sooner the better that many a Church should apply to the great Physician for spiritual healing. 3. The Church will by and by become perfectly whole. 4. When perfectly whole, diseased persons will no longer be admitted into its fellowship (Rev. xxi. 27). (*J. Williams.*)

Vers. 9–11. **Then shalt thou call.**—*God's wonderful response to His people's prayers:*—When God calls to us by His Word, it becomes us to say, "Here we are; what saith our Lord unto His servants?" But that God should say to us, "Behold Me, here I am," is strange. When we cry to Him, as if He were at a distance, He will let us know that He is near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought He was. "It is I, be not afraid." When danger is near, our Protector is nearer, a very present help. "Here I am," ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire. What have you to say to Me? God is attentive to the prayers of the upright (Ps. cxxx. 2). No sooner do they call to Him, but He answers, Ready, ready. Wherever they are praying, God saith, Here I am hearing; I am in the midst of you, nigh unto them in all things (Deut. iv. 7). (*M. Henry.*) **If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke.**—*One path to prosperity:*—In the figures implied the prophet represents extreme adversity; and by metaphors which he distinctly puts forth he describes renewed prosperity; and he connects the marvellous change from the deepest adversity to the highest prosperity with the avoidance or laying aside of three sins which then beset the people of God, and with the performance of two ordinary duties. 1. The besetting sins. (1) Oppression. "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke," *i. e.* oppression. (2) Scorn and contempt. "The putting forth of the finger" is the spirit that speaks in the, "Thou fool!" (3) "And speaking vanity"—evil speaking generally. 2. The duties. (1) "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul"—*i. e.* give, serve, minister, according as men about you have need, and according as you have ability and opportunity. (2) "And satisfy the afflicted soul"—*i. e.* visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction—comfort those that mourn—endeavour according to your power to wipe away the tears from the eyes of all the sorrowful. (*S. Martin.*) *Oppression:*—The oppression of others is an early sin, a sin which you often see rampant among children—among very little children. Oppression is a household sin, it will be found more or less in almost every family. There may be some cases where it is not, but they are decided exceptions. And it is a sin in connection with all family relations. The godly husband is charged to love the wife even as himself, and even as Christ loveth the Church; but there are many husbands—some professing to be Christ's disciples—who are the wretched oppressors of wives. Oppression is a household sin—seen in parents—seen in brothers and sisters—seen in the husband. And it is a social sin—seen in all the walks of life. 1. Especially where men employ each other, and take advantage of each other's skill, and of each other's strength. It is a national sin—seen more or less in all rulers; and an international sin—seen in the conduct of nations to each other. Manifestly, therefore, a very common sin is this putting on of the yoke—seen where men have no right to put on the yoke at all; and seen in a heavy yoke where men have only the right to put on a light yoke, and they impose a heavy yoke; and seen in thus keeping on of the yoke after the yoke should be removed. (*Ibid.*) *Creed and outward ordinances not the supreme things:*—1. Nothing is here said about this people having declined from religious belief, or in this case from the observance of religious rites. God had to find fault with them on these grounds, but what I want you to notice is, that God is not speaking of such declension here. What does this show? It shows that a man, so far as the creed on his lip is concerned, may maintain his orthodoxy, and that a man, so far as religious ordinances are concerned, may maintain his devoutness, and yet have a heart thoroughly declining from God's statutes. 2. There is an eternal connection between righteousness and blessedness. 3. The true state of individual saints and of congregations of saints is light, not

obscurity; brightness, not dulness; happiness, not misery; spiritual health, not moral sickness; usefulness, not sterility and barrenness; continuance, not declension. (*Ibid.*) "*Putting forth of the finger*":—A gesture of derision. Hence the middle finger is called by Persius, *digitus infamis*. (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry.**—*The reflex influence of missionary enterprise:*—I. MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE EXALTS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. The whole life of the Christian after his conversion is a discipline fitted to purify and exalt his character. What, then, are the works and exercises that tend most to build up Christian character to a lofty height? I know nothing equal to work that engages us directly in seeking the conversion of our fellow-men, and especially of those whose conversion seems naturally most difficult, such as we find in the mission field. 1. The first test I set before you is the tendency of this work to exercise the Christian graces. Whatever exercises these most, must produce the highest Christian result; for Christian character is just the Christian graces consolidated and fixed in the soul by cultivation. Take, then, a grace like faith. What can call this into play like the work of missions from first to last? This is the very objection that worldly men have to it. Again, take love. How does this grace, when fully called out, exalt Christian character! But there is no working of love like the sending of the Gospel to the perishing souls of men at the ends of the earth. I grant that charity in a true and important sense begins at home. But I confidently ask if home charity—needful and precious as it is—be as lofty a kind of charity as that which deals with want and woe, enforced by the naked claim of humanity in distress. Is it not an exalted feature of British commerce that every great calamity strikes to its heart, so that immediately a subscription is opened on every stock-exchange? But why should missions be less expansive, and the soul be less provided for than the body? 2. Our second test shall be resemblance to God. From beginning to end, God takes a missionary attitude. He sends the Son; He sends the Spirit; apart even from grace, He sends rain on the just and on the unjust. As the true God delights in mercy, truth, and righteousness, we claim for the works that foster these in the soul, as the most God-like, the highest stamp of worth and sacredness! 3. Our third test shall be the example of Jesus Christ. What was He if not a missionary—the missionary that travelled the farthest, stooped the lowest, gave up the most, suffered the worst? The very world has learned new ideas of greatness and goodness from Jesus Christ; and this central idea of self-sacrificing love, as the very element of moral grandeur, stands out like a new revelation. 4. I mention a fourth test, which is, our imitation of the greatest Christians. Can one be mentioned that has not sympathized with the spread and diffusion of the Gospel? II. The second way in which missionary enterprise reacts beneficially on the Church is in INCREASING CHRISTIAN JOY. This, of course, would follow from improving Christian character. But I take another line of illustration. 1. Missions remove hindrances to Christian joy. It is a great hindrance to think that the world is still in so backward a state. But the faithful Christian can say, "Well, this is not my fault. I am doing something to remedy it; and the more that we all do, the sooner will the evil be cured." It is also a great hindrance to Christian joy that the Church is so divided. But here, generally, in the mission field, matters are at their best. I will only mention another hindrance to joy which missions remove—the sceptical doubts and questionings as to the truth of Christianity. Now the visible living power of the Gospel, as seen on the mission field, is not only an evidence of divinity, but meets some current objections and difficulties. Objections are taken to the unity of the human race. But here, in point of fact, the race is shown to be one. And this casts indirect light on the question as to the antiquity of man. A book that casts more light on the history of the human race than any other, that goes more to the depths of human nature, and that works more stupendous and blessed changes on man in every country and clime, is not likely to be mistaken as to his age, and the conviction, which every day's experience of missions deepens, that the Bible is the God-given book for the race, may help us to wait calmly and hopefully as occasional difficulties arise, till time and study clear them away. 2. While missions thus remove hindrances to Christian joy, they also give positive occasions to it. The triumphs of the Gospel in these new scenes must delight every Christian heart. The Christian, as it were, lives over again his own Christian experience in coming to the Saviour and tasting the riches of His grace. He enters into the gladness of the missionary who, after many a hard and sore struggle, rejoices that he has not run in vain, neither laboured

in vain. He rises even to the joy of angels, as fellow-helpers to conversion, and as assuming the guardianship of unlooked-for heirs of salvation to whom they minister. Nay, the Christian's joy is not complete, till he thinks of his God and Saviour, who for this hour came to the Cross, with all its shame and sorrow, and now, in looking back on it all, sees here of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. III. The third way in which I shall show that missionary enterprise reacts beneficially on the Church is IN ENLARGING ITS REWARD. I might have dwelt on the impulse to usefulness and success in all other directions which, with the foregoing enhancements of character and joy, constitute reward in this life. But I point rather here to "the recompense of the reward" hereafter. Our term of labour is bounded. Ought we not, then, to take home the truth that heaven, with its rewards, is dependent for its degrees on the effects of time? The missionary field thus holds out a glorious opportunity of brightening heaven. It will be brightened by the very results of our labours in peopling it with ransomed souls; but over and above, there are glorious rewards and honours of which we can only speak here like men that dream. (*J. Cairns, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. **And the Lord shall guide thee continually.**—*Our Guide:*—Our earthly existence is a pilgrimage which none can successfully perform without Divine aid. I. ALL MEN NEED A GUIDE. There are many who have been determined to have their own way; and when that way has led them into the path of sin and ended in shame and unhappiness, they have said, "Ah, I wish I had known this in time!" Many persons often wish, "O that I could begin my life again with my present knowledge of what is best for me!" In the pilgrimage of earthly existence there are many perils. There is often the uncertainty of darkness. We are beset by the peril of false leaders. There are spiritual robbers who meet us on every hand. There are snares of sinful pleasure and selfish indulgence. There is the intoxication of prosperity. Some allow themselves to be broken down by adversity. We are in peril from flatterers. II. THE LORD IS OUR GUIDE. 1. He is a compassionate guide. 2. A faithful guide. 3. A perfect guide. 4. He knows your life at the end as well as the beginning. III. TO WHAT WILL THE LORD GUIDE US? 1. To truth. 2. To success in life. True success is to be able to do the will of God. 3. The Lord will guide the burdened to the arms of strength. (*W. Birch.*) *The promised guidance:*—I. IT IS A NECESSARY PROMISE. What could the children of Israel have done in the wilderness, without the cloudy fiery pillar to lead them over its trackless wastes? This world is just such a wilderness to us. II. IT IS A REASONABLE PROMISE. I do not mean that it is reasonable for us to expect it. No, indeed, we have no right to look for a blessing so great and so gracious. I mean it is a reasonable promise so far as God is concerned. It is what He can easily fulfil. III. IT IS A COMFORTING PROMISE. It meets our wants as the children of God, and meets them fully. If we are depending on our fellow-creatures for help, there are always two difficulties in our way. One is that our friends may not know just what help we are needing; or if they know it, they may not be able to reach us with the help we need. But God is able to concentrate His power, His presence, and His sufficiency in the case of each of His people, as thoroughly and as effectually as though that single case were the only one existing to claim His attention or to enlist His power. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *A happy Christian:*—Observe in what connection this sunny sketch of prosperity occurs. It is set in a frame that excites the strong prejudice of some professing Christians. The setting is a framework of duties. The blessings are not promised to every Christian unconditionally, but are fenced in with terms: "If thou doest this, and if thou doest that, then shall such-and-such blessings be thine." Though salvation is of grace, the happiness of the Christian does depend upon his obedience. I. These people, who are thus full of God's Spirit, are described as possessing CONTINUAL GUIDANCE. "The Lord shall guide thee continually." 1. There come to them, as to other men, dilemmas in providence. He goes not amiss who goes in the company of God. 2. The path of doctrine, also, is sometimes difficult. The Holy Ghost will lead us into all truth. So shall it be, likewise, in matters of spiritual experience. 3. Our experience often seems to be as though it had no rule. If we are enabled by grace to seek close and vital union with Christ, and to live upon Him continually, we may rest assured that whether our experience be gloomy or delightful, and whether our inward conflicts or joys be paramount, He will still be at the helm, and will guide us continually. II. The second blessing promised in the text is INWARD SATISFACTION. "And satisfy thy soul in drought." It is a blessed thing to have the soul satisfied, for the soul

is of great capacity. The Christian has got what his soul wants. He has a removal of all that which marred his peace, blighted his prospects, and made his soul empty and hungry. His sin is pardoned; he is reconciled to God. He is satisfied with God's dispensation. He is satisfied with God's love. He is satisfied with promises that can never be broken, with covenants that can never be violated, with oaths that stand fast like mountains, and with the words of God which are great as the fathomless sea. He is satisfied with his God. The consequence of such a satisfaction as this is that the Christian is as well satisfied at one time as at another, if his soul be right. He shall be satisfied in times of drought. In the vast times of distress the Christian is still satisfied. III. The next blessing is, SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS. "And make fat thy bones." Note the figure. It is not "make fat thy flesh." When Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked. Sometimes abundance in earthly things makes poverty in heavenly things. But fatness here is to be upon the man's hardest and most necessary part of his frame. A man is really built up when his bones, the solid pillars of the house of his manhood, have been strengthened. Vigour has been put into his constitution where it was most required. The figure seems to me to indicate two or three things in one. There is health here, the soul is purged from its vices, sicknesses, and unbelief, pride, sloth, and such like. There is vigour here, no lukewarmness. There is growth, the man is not stunted. Christian joy is, after all, Christian strength. IV. The fourth blessing is this, "AND THOU SHALT BE LIKE A WATERED GARDEN." This figure of a garden is a very sweet and attractive one. Our fancy is soon at work to invent a picture of flower-beds, and fruit-trees, shady walks, and pleasant fountains, laid out close to some grand mansion, and opening its fairest views to the best apartments of the palace. Such a garden needs constant care, and then, although it may be more beautiful at one season than another, it will never be like a wild heath, or totally bereft of charms. But, alas! some professors of religion are not like this: there is little evidence of diligent cultivation in their character. V. There is the blessing of CONTINUED STRENGTH, CONTINUED FRESHNESS, CONTINUED SUPPLY. "As a well of water whose waters fail not." There are many wells in the East which do fail, and many apparent springs which deceive the traveller. I observe that the margin has it, "whose waters deceive not, or lie not." And how many a man who has appeared like a Christian has been but a mere deceiver! Not so God's true people. They shall have so much grace that when a Christian friend expects to find grace in them, he shall not be disappointed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Thou shalt be like a watered garden.—*A watered garden:*—Cannot a garden water itself? No. That is the answer, definite, cold—discouraging, encouraging, as we may take the term. Is it not enough to be a garden? what matter about the sunshine? who cares about the rain or the dew? Is it not enough to be a garden, a geometric form, pearled and diamonded with many a flower? The king's gardens cannot do without rain; Solomon's parterres wither away but for the morning dew and the summer shower. We need something from without. Cannot a man sustain himself by his own resources? He cannot. What do you mean by being a man? A figure is not a man; a corpse is not a man; a mere personality, if it could be detached from all other personalities, would not be a man. We cannot live upon stature or figure or aught that our hand can hold. Life is deeper; there is a sanctuary of life, a well far away, where spring water bubbles and gurgles and flashes out in the sunlight like a great gospel preached to the thirst of man. Self-sustenance is not the law of the body; why should it be the law of the mind? The mind is not sustained by itself. You have books; lay them down, be your own book. You cannot. What do you want with all these libraries, and museums, and academies, and colleges, and schools of every name and degree? These are the wheatfields which the soul reaps, and it needs them every one, for the soul is bigger than literature. The soul lives by friction with some other soul. God is fire. To come into happy attrition with Him, or contact, or friction, who can tell what may come out of that soul touching soul, man praying to God? We are continually undergoing a process of education. What hast thou that thou hast not received? Have you ever seen a garden that has been left to itself? What do you think of it? God waits to give us every one more water, more sustenance, more sunshine. What we might be if we would enjoy our privileges! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The garden of God:*—1. The Church is appropriately compared to a garden because it is the place—I. OF CHOICE FLOWERS. Christ comes to His garden, and plants there some of the brightest spirits that ever flowered upon the world. Some of them are violets, inconspicuous, but sweet. You have to search and find them. You do not see them very often, perhaps, but you find where

they have been by the brightened face of the invalid, and the sprig of geranium on the stand, and the new window-curtains keeping out the glare of the sunlight. These flowers in Christ's garden are not like the sunflower, gaudy in the light, but wherever darkness hovers over a soul that needs to be comforted, there they stand, night-blooming cereuses. 2. But in Christ's garden there are plants that may be better compared to the Mexican cactus—thorns without, loveliness within; men with sharp points of character. They wound almost every one that touches them. They are hard to handle. Men pronounce them nothing but thorns, but Christ loves them notwithstanding all their sharpnesses. Many a man has had a very hard ground to cultivate, and it has only been through severe trial he has raised even the smallest crop of grace. A very harsh minister was talking to a very placid elder, and the elder said, "Doctor, I do wish you would control your temper." "Ah," said the minister, "I control more temper in five minutes than you do in five years." 3. There are others planted in Christ's garden who are always radiant, always impressive—more like the roses of deep hue that we occasionally find; the Martin Luthers, St. Pauls, Chrysostoms, Wyckliffes, Latimers, and Samuel Rutherfords. What in other men is a spark, in them is a conflagration. When they sweat, they sweat great drops of blood. When they pray, their prayer takes fire. When they preach, it is a Pentecost. When they fight, it is a Thermopylæ. When they die, it is a martyrdom. 4. In this garden of the Church I also find the snowdrop, beautiful but cold-looking, seemingly another phase of winter. I mean those Christians who are precise in their tastes, unimpassioned, pure as snowdrops and as cold. 5. But I have not told you of the most beautiful flower of all this garden. If you see a century plant your emotions are started. You say, "Why, this flower has been a hundred years gathering up for one bloom, and it will be a hundred years more before other petals will come out." But I have to tell you of a plant that was gathering up from all eternity, and that nineteen hundred years ago put forth its bloom never to wither. It is the passion plant of the Cross! II. The Church is a place OF SELECT FRUITS. The coarser fruits are planted in the orchard or they are set out on the sunny hillside; but the choicest fruits are kept in the garden. So in the world outside the Church, Christ has planted a great many beautiful things—patience, charity, generosity, integrity; but He intends the choicest fruits to be in the garden, and, if they are not there, then shame on the Church. Religion is not a mere sentimentality. It is a practical, life-giving, healthful fruit—not posies, but apples. The Church of Christ is a glorious garden and it is full of fruit. I know there is some poor fruit in it; but are you going to destroy the whole garden because of a little gnarled fruit? There is no grander, nobler collection in all the earth than the collection of Christians. III. The Church is the place of THOROUGH IRRIGATION. No garden could prosper long without plenty of water. I have seen a garden in the midst of a desert, yet blooming and luxuriant. All around was dearth and barrenness; but there were pipes, aqueducts, reaching from this garden up to the mountains, and through those aqueducts the water came streaming down and tossing up into beautiful fountains, until every root and leaf and flower was saturated. That is like the Church. The Church is a garden in the midst of a great desert of sin and suffering; but it is well irrigated. From the mountains of God's strength there flow down rivers of gladness. Preaching the Gospel is one of the aqueducts. The Bible is another. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are aqueducts. Everything comes from above; pardon, joy, adoption, sanctification. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath.**—*Sabbath observance a Godward duty:*—If the true fast (vers. 3–7) typifies the Israelite's duties towards his neighbour, the Sabbath represents his duties towards God. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Turning the foot from the Sabbath:*—"If thou turnest thy foot away from the Sabbath" is equivalent to saying, "If thou dost not tread its holy ground with the foot of week-day work." (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Sabbath day:*—We shall consider the words of the text—I. WITH REGARD TO THE JEWS. With that view we shall state—1. The reasons for the institution of the Sabbath. 2. The manner in which the prophet required it to be celebrated. 3. The promises made to those who worthily hallow the Sabbath day. II. WITH REGARD TO CHRISTIANS. 1. Are Christians obliged to observe a day of rest? 2. Is that day celebrated with all the sanctity it requires? (*J. Saurin.*) *The institution of the Sabbath:*—Four considerations gave occasion for the institution of the Sabbath day. 1. God was wishful to perpetuate two original truths on which the whole evidence of religion

devolves; the first is, that the world had a beginning; the second, that God is its Author. 2. The second reason was to prevent idolatry. This remark claims peculiar attention, many of the Mosaic precepts being founded on the situation in which the Jews were placed. Let this general remark be applied to the subject in hand. The people, on leaving Egypt, were separated from a nation that worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. "The ancient Egyptians," says Diodorus of Sicily, "struck with the beauty of the universe, thought it owed its origin to two eternal divinities, that presided over all the others: the one was the sun, to whom they gave the name of Osiris; the other was the moon, to whom they gave the name of Isis." God, to preserve His people from these errors, instituted a festival which sapped the whole system, and which avowedly contemplated every creature of the universe as the production of the Supreme Being. And this may be the reason why Moses remarked to the Jews, on leaving Egypt, that God renewed the institution of the Sabbath (Deut. v. 15). 3. God was wishful to promote humanity. 4. In a word, the design of God, in the institution of the Sabbath, was to recall to the minds of men the recollection of their original equality: he requires masters and servants alike to abstain from labour, so as in some sort to confound the diversity of their conditions, and to abate that pride, of which superior rank is so common a source. (*Ibid.*)

Sabbath observance:—I. THE DUTY is thus stated: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath," etc. 1. This, then, is the first point to be noticed with respect to the observance of the Sabbath. It is, says God, "My holy day," the day which I have hallowed for Myself, which I have reserved for My own. We are no more at liberty to determine for ourselves how we will employ the Sabbath, than the Israelites were at liberty to determine for themselves to what uses they would put the tabernacle, or the temple, which had been built and sanctified for God, according to His direction and for His own peculiar service; and, by regarding any of the Sabbath hours as being at our own disposal, we are guilty of the same profanation with which the Jews would have been chargeable, had they determined to do their pleasure with respect to the uses which they would make of God's holy habitation, respecting which He had said, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell." 2. Let us suppose, then, that we have turned away our foot from trampling upon God's day, by consulting our own will and inclination as to the way in which we employ it, and are wishing and waiting to know what is the will of God concerning it. The text thus proceeds: "And call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable." To call anything is to give it a name corresponding with its nature, or to describe it by its qualities. We are to call the Sabbath "a delight;" or are to call "the holy of the Lord," *i. e.* the holy day of the Lord, "honourable." Here, then, are two properties of the Sabbath, two points of view in which we are to regard it. It should be so distinguished from other days by the peculiar delight which it affords, as well as by the pre-eminent dignity with which it is invested. 3. The honour to be paid to the Sabbath is our part: the delight to be found in the Sabbath is God's part. And the text proceeds to show that if we honour His day, God will surely keep His promise of making it a delight. Let us, then, carefully consider the way in which we should "honour" the Sabbath. What is said to be "our own" is evidently distinguished from what belongs to the Sabbath. It comprehends whatever we have to do, or to delight in, which appertains to the six days' work from which God ceased, and which He had ended on the seventh day, in contradistinction to what appertains to the seventh day which God set apart and sanctified and blessed. There is, therefore, no reference in these words to sinful ways, or to unlawful pleasures; but to the appointed duties and allowed delights of the six days which God has given to us for these purposes. Heaven—the rest which remaineth for the people of God—is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews as a Sabbath-keeping, a Sabbath-rest. The Sabbath is a figure of that blessed and holy state. "Our own ways and pleasures," then, are those which belong to this lower creation; and which we shall have done with when we depart out of the world; and for these things six days are given to us. The things of the Sabbath are all such things as shall be perfected and enjoyed for ever in that city of God, in those courts above, where Sabbaths never end. These remarks will furnish us with a practical rule for determining what may be done and what may not be done on the Sabbath day. Where there is the "single eye," that is, the simple aim, to do the will of God, all doubts will be readily solved and difficulties disappear, and the duty be made plain by asking such questions as these: Is this secular work necessary for the supply of our daily wants, for the relief of suffering nature, for the accomplishing the will and service of God? Is it indispensable to these ends that it should be

done, and done on the Sabbath day? If, in the conscientious exercise of an enlightened judgment, we decide in the affirmative, then we may do such necessary things with confidence and comfort. But, even in these things, care must be exercised that they do not interfere, beyond the just and reasonable limits of necessity and charity, with the appropriate duties and employments of the day. "Not finding thine own pleasure." Pleasure is here evidently contrasted with business. God has given to us not only our six days' labour and work, but also our six days' gratifications and sources of enjoyment. There are the delights of earth, as well as the duties of earth. There is Nature, with all her various works. There are also the pleasures of literature, in all their vast and various extent. There is, further, the enjoyment of social intercourse, and an almost countless number of modes of refreshment, for both body and mind, which God would have us to use, as opportunity is given and need may be, to invigorate us for the more serious employments of the head or the hands. But these are "our own pleasure;" and this we are not to find on God's holy day. Mark the expression, "not finding thine own pleasure." In order to "find," we seek. "Our own pleasure" may casually come in our way; but we must not look for it, endeavour after it, or pursue it as our object, in any manner or measure, upon the Sabbath. The pleasures which we must endeavour on this day to "find" must be such as are not of earthly origin or of man's invention, but such as will endure when the world shall be no more, and will furnish a part of the business and the bliss of the Christian's happy and eternal home. Further, "not speaking (thine own) words." "Thine own," here, is in italics; it is inserted by the translators, and only encumbers the passage. The meaning is, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, "nor speaking words;" that is, not speaking words concerning thine own ways and thine own pleasure. II. TO SUCH AN OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH A SPECIAL PROMISE IS MADE. "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." If we make the Sabbath a holy day, God will make it a happy day. In the application of this promise to ourselves, we must suppose and take it for granted that we are reconciled to God. Then, in the very measure in which we honour the Sabbath, God will make the duties and employments of the day channels of joy and peace and sacred pleasure to the soul. "And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth," etc. This is a promise of national prosperity and temporal advancement, with a confirmation of the blessing pronounced by Isaac upon Jacob and his posterity. And, although these were shadows of better things to the Christian Church, and the fulfilment of this promise is now to be looked for in spiritual and eternal blessings, yet it has frequently been testified, on observation and experience, that a holy Sabbath has been followed by a happy week; and, when we honour God's holy day, we shall not fail to find that His blessing still rests upon it. (*T. Best, M.A.*) *Early English law on the Sabbath:*—In almost the earliest, if not the earliest, code of English law—the laws of Enach, King of Wessex—there was a provision made for the observance of Sunday. According to these laws if a slave was forced by his master to work upon Sunday, he was by that very fact set free, and the lord had to pay a fine. If the slave worked by his own will and without the direction of his lord, he was subjected to corporal chastisement, and if a freeman worked on the Holy Day he became a slave. He lost his freedom, or else he had to pay what, at that time, was the almost impossible fine of sixty shillings. Now that law at the very beginning of English legislation may have had very much to do with the position that the Anglo-Saxon race has taken in the world. According to the promise of this old prophet the word of the Lord has said, "I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth if thou keepest the Sabbath day." (*R. F. Horton.*) *The Sabbath a rest from self:*—I suppose the essence of this Christian Sabbath was never more perfectly described than in the words of the prophet. 1. The first principle of the Christian Sabbath is that there should be one day in the week on which we are not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words, that is to say, the Christian Sabbath is not to be, like the civic Sunday, a rest from work, important as that may be, but it is a rest from self, which is all-important, and is, indeed, the creation and the preservation of the spiritual in man. It is a rest from self, not to speak our own words on that day, not to take our own pleasures, not to adopt our own way. I think we see what is meant if we put it in this way. Our life as men is literally rooted in God, and its health depends on our knowing it and recognizing it. 2. Now, when we have recognized that this is the purpose of the day we still have to consider how that purpose is best accomplished. According to the practice of the Old Testament, and, apparently, according to the

intention of the New, the sanctuary, the place of public worship, is the means by which that can be accomplished. 3. I think we ought to honestly face the question which is often raised at the present time, whether the life I am describing cannot be maintained without the sanctuary. Men say frequently to-day that they find they can really worship better in their own homes, and still more in the open country, than in the assembly of the house of God. Now, the only danger I see in that position is that by the very necessity of the case it violates the first requirement of the Sabbath as it is here stated. You stay at home in your house or you go out into the country on Sunday. In doing that you are going your own way, you are seeking your own pleasure, you are following your own bent—that is to say, you are violating the very principle on which this Sabbath rests. And it does not seem very improbable that when you have violated the very principle at the beginning you will succeed in recovering it at the end. (*Ibid.*) *A Sabbath-week:*—Common-sense must tell us that no man who is going his own way, finding his own pleasure, and speaking his own words, for six days in the week, will abstain from them on the seventh. The devotion, the obedience, and forgetfulness of self which should mark the devout worshipper on Sunday, must be his companions all the week through. And the exercise of those graces through the week must be our habitual preparation for the Lord's Day. So that, in fact, the teaching of the prophet amounts to this—that the true servant of God will at no time do his own ways, find his own pleasure, or speak his own words, where ways, pleasure, or words will not be such as God would love to look upon. The Christian will seek God's grace, that in all things he may follow the example of his Lord, who declared, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." I appeal to your own hearts and consciences, to what you know of yourselves or have seen in others, whether any good has ever come to any of us, from going our own way, finding our own pleasure, speaking our own words? (*F. E. Paget, D.D.*) "*Thine own ways*":—It is supposed that Isaiah required the Jews to keep what has been called a Puritanical Sabbath. I believe that this is a complete misconception of the prophet's meaning. Their "own ways," which the people were forbidden to follow on the Sabbath, were the common secular labours of the week. Doing their "own pleasure" has no reference to recreation or amusement. Some translators render it doing their "own business;" but it probably means here, as it constantly means elsewhere, doing "what they liked." Luther translates it admirably, doing their "own will." They were to spend the Sabbath, as God had commanded them, in rest; they were not at liberty to follow their own inclination by carrying on their ordinary trade. Their "own words," which they were not to speak on the Sabbath, were the words in which their business was transacted; words which, like the business itself, belonged to the other days of the week. What the prophet forbids on the seventh day is what the Commandment forbids—not pleasure, but work. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Rabbinical prohibitions:*—The stricter Rabbinical schools built upon this general prohibition of all work innumerable minute precepts, many of which are so grotesque that to quote them would be to answer no other purpose than to amuse. One ingenious commentator, who happily appears to have had only a very few disciples, insisted that as it was a duty to rest from the beginning to the end of the Sabbath, all muscular exertion was sinful; and that, therefore, strict fidelity to the Commandment required that a man should remain during all the twenty-four hours of the Sabbath in exactly the same position, without moving a limb or a finger, a kind of "rest" which must have been very much more exhausting than hard work. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath compared to the best room of the house:*—1. Every house of any consideration has in it a best room. It is usually the largest in the house, and the most comely. It usually is furnished with the choicest things which the owner can afford, and represents the best outward estate of his household. Here is the best carpet. Here are the best colours. Here is the best furniture. Here are hung the best pictures. Here are the chairs burnished and covered. And here, it may be, is the sofa, luxurious with extra springs. The few choice treasures are put upon the mantelpiece, or on some corner shelf. Whatever there is that stands apart from common uses by being a little better the parlour receives. And this room is scrupulously kept—too scrupulously, often. All festive occasions are celebrated in it. It is the room of honour. It is here that we devote ourselves to our company when we would show them hospitality. It stands in the house as a perpetual reminder of beauty—what little beauty we can command; of hospitality—so much as we are able to exercise of it; of superiority. A best room is not simply an emblem of vanity, as cynics would say. To have a room which has

in it choice things, is rather the unconscious inspiration of ideality, it is a desire to maintain it in the household; and it is a silent but real influence for refinement and for higher living. 2. It is a sad thing to see a person or a family that makes one day just like another; that does not care to make one day better than any of the others; that regards all things as good enough. On a low level, it is a moral influence that leads one to desire to dress better on some occasions than on others, and to spread a better table on some occasions than on others. It is aspiration in one of its lower forms. Now, what the parlour is to the house, the Jewish Sabbath and its substitute, the Christian's Lord's Day, were meant to be to the week. The week is a house, and Sunday is the best room in it, and it ought to have the best things put into it, and it ought to be kept religiously; and it is to exercise upon all our time just the same unconscious influence, or conscious influence, as the case may be, which a well-prepared and well-kept parlour does invariably exercise upon all the occupants of the house. Every week was to have its parlour day. It was to be a day that should be looked up to by the young and the old as the best day of the week. In other words, it was to be "a delight." It was to be "honourable," and so, memorable. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **And call the Sabbath a delight.**—*The luxury of the Sabbath:*—The word is a strong one, Delight, Delicacy, Luxury. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The Sabbath a delight:*—I. POINT OUT A FEW PARTICULARS WHY THE TRUE BELIEVER ESTEEMS AND CALLS THE SABBATH A DELIGHT; showing at the same time why the natural man should find no delight, at least no holy delight, in that day. 1. Because it brings with it a cessation and rest from worldly cares. 2. Because on that day he hopes to learn much in the school of Christ. 3. Because of that holy communion which it allows with the people of God. 4. Because of the remembrances which that day brings with it. On the Sabbath God rested from His work. On the Sabbath, how many of our Saviour's gracious miracles were wrought! On the Sabbath, how many spiritual miracles doth He still work! On our Sabbath day it was that our Lord burst the bonds of death. Is not here matter of pleasurable meditation? Salvation is finished; and man restored to the favour and presence and image of God! 5. Because it is a type and foretaste of the heavenly rest—of the eternal Sabbath. II. SHOW HOW WE MAY EMPLOY IT SO AS TO MAKE IT MOST DELIGHTFUL. By giving the whole day to God, so far as possibly can be done, in spiritual exercises. (*C. Neale, M.A.*) *The brightest of days:*—We are to find in this day—1. The joy of healthy repose. 2. The joy of domestic reunion and consecration. 3. The joy of eternal Sabbatism. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *The Sabbath a delight:*—The day of worship should be a day of gladness. 1. It brings rest from the toils and cares of the week. From the dust and the sweat, the grime and the languor, I shake myself free for a while. I reach an oasis, with palm-trees and a well, in my pilgrimage through the deserts. I sit down under God's shadow. 2. It invites to the noblest exercises and employments. Mind and heart, lips and soul and all my nature, unite in prayer, in praise, in the study and contemplation of the things which are unseen and eternal. There is no work on earth to compare with it. 3. It introduces to the communion of souls. I go up to God's house in company with many others. I realize that I am not alone, that I am a member of a brotherhood and family, that all around me are kindred souls. It is a thought that brings me strength, and that satisfies my love. 4. It lifts me into the presence of my Lord—Father, and Son, and Spirit. I dwell in His sanctuary. I hearken to His voice. I feel His quickening and invigorating touch. I receive afresh His baptism and unction. Behold, God is in this place, and it is for me the gate of heaven. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) *The Sabbath a delight:*—"If thou callest the Sabbath a delight," because it leads thee to God; not "a burden," because it leads thee from thine everyday life (Amos viii. 5). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Sabbath a festive time:*—"It is a festival time for man's higher nature in communion with the unseen. As the tired eye, which has been strained by long and close application to some work near at hand, rests itself by gazing on the far horizons or the stars, so there is a rest in lifting thought from the near and the lower objects which too often engross us, and fixing it upon the unseen and eternal. This is, perhaps, the grand reason for our Saviour's own comment: "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) **Honourable.**—*The Sabbath made "honourable":*—When do we make the Sabbath an "honourable," glorious day? 1. When we make honourable preparation for it. 2. When we give it honourable entertainment. 3. When we have a precious esteem of every moment of Sabbath time, and are jealous lest any drop of it should run waste. 4. When we have a singular esteem of all the institutions and ordinances of

the day. 5. When it is the grief of our souls that we can keep Sabbaths no better, and we strive cordially and conscientiously to keep the next better than we did the last. (*T. Case, M.A.*) Nor speaking thine own words.—*Sabbath-speaking:*—"Nor speaking thine own words." "Talking talk." (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Useless words*, void of meaning, and of needless number: the phrase, as in Hos. x. 4, is here applied to unspiritual gossip and bombast. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Speech rest on Sunday:*—Hitzig on this passage remarks that "the law regarding the Sabbath has here already received the Jewish addition, that 'speaking is work.'" But from the promise that God's Sabbath-rest was a rest from His speaking the creative words (Ps. xxxiii. 6), the only conclusion drawn was that one must rest on the Sabbath, in a certain measure, from speaking as well as working; and when Rabbi Simon ben Jochai called to his talkative old mother on the Sabbath, "Sabbath-keeping is called silence," this was not meant to be understood as if speaking in itself were working, and all speaking on the Sabbath was therefore forbidden. The Rabbinical explanation of the present passage is as follows: "Let not thy speaking on the Sabbath be the same as that on working days." (*Ibid.*) *Better for the Sunday rest:*—Scientists say that telegraph wires are better conductors on Monday than on Saturday, on account of their Sunday rest. The well-proved fact that human beings profit by a weekly rest-day emphasizes the protest of Christian people against the secularization of the Sabbath. (*Christian Budget.*)

Ver. 14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.—*Delighting in God:*—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DELIGHTING OURSELVES IN THE LORD. 1. A contemplation of His infinite and adorable perfections; such a contemplation as to derive the highest satisfaction from them; to see in them all that is amiable and lovely. 2. A well-grounded hope of interest in Him; for though this is not the primary, it is a subordinate ground of the believer's joy, and one of unspeakable importance. 3. Communion with God in holy duties. 4. A sanctified use of all our common mercies, receiving them as His gift, and esteeming them on that account. 5. Contentment in Him, even in the absence of every other good. 6. Delighting in God is accompanied with the cheering prospect of being for ever with Him. II. VIEW SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM THIS HEAVENLY STATE OF MIND. Delighting ourselves in the Lord will weaken the influence of sin, and strengthen all the Christian graces. It will be an antidote against fretfulness and discontent, carnality and worldly-mindedness, presumption and self-confidence. It will confirm our faith, inflame our love, and brighten our hopes and prospects. Communion with God disarms our spiritual enemies, or secures us from their attack. It is of eminent use in all the parts of practical religion. It makes active in doing, and steadfast in suffering the will of God; it infuses life into our prayers and praises, and causes us to come with boldness and cheerfulness to the house and table of the Lord. Sorrow and dejection enfeeble the mind; but the joy of the Lord is our strength. The joys of religion will convert this miserable world into a little heaven, and make the Church militant resemble the Church triumphant above, where there are no mourning garments, no dejected countenances, or hearts consumed with grief. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Duty the road to prosperity:*—I. DELIGHT IN THE LORD IS CONNECTED WITH THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH. II. TRUE PROSPERITY DEPENDS UPON OBEDIENCE TO DIVINE COMMAND. III. THERE CAN BE NO PERMANENT PROSPERITY APART FROM MORALITY. (*Homiletic Review.*) *Riding over the heights:*—The meaning is, "I will carry thee triumphantly over all obstacles" (Deut. xxxii. 11). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

CHAPTER LIX.

VERS. 1–9. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened.—*Isaiah lviii. and lix.:*—In the former address, to the dead works on which the people founded their claim to redemption, there were set in contrast the virtues well-pleasing of God, and for which Jehovah promises redemption as a gracious reward; in this discourse, the sins which hinder the accomplishment of redemption are still more directly laid bare. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Sin and grace:*—In this chapter we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious. (*M. Henry.*) *Why some*

seekers are not saved:—I. THE FACT CONFESSED. 1. The people of whom I am specially thinking have been hearers of the Gospel, and diligent hearers too. 2. They have become men of prayer, after a fashion (chap. lviii. 2). 3. These people are greatly disappointed with themselves: not altogether so, for they know to a great extent where the blame lies, but yet they had hoped better things of themselves. II. THE IMPUTATION IMPLIED AND MET. Notice the first word of our text: "Behold!" This is like our *nota bene;* mark well, turn your eye this way. If you are not saved, it is not because God is unable to save you, nor is it because He is unwilling to hear your prayers. III. THE ACCUSATION PRESSED AND EXPLAINED. Your accusation may be turned against you. You thought that God's hand was shortened, that it could not save; but it is your hand that is shortened, for you have not laid hold upon Christ. The real reason why you have not found peace is sin. It may be—1. Sin unconfessed. 2. Sin unforsaken. 3. Sin hankered after. 4. Sin of which you are unaware. 5. Some sin of omission. 6. An ugly temper. 7. An intellectual sin. 8. Gross or secret sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Hindrances to the conversion of all nations:*—1. The lack of deep, earnest sympathy with Christ on the part of His people. 2. An evil heart of unbelief. 3. The unconsecrated wealth of the Church. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The sad issues of sin:*—I. IT BRINGS SEPARATION. Instead of running to God, we flee from Him. His dazzling majesty appals us. His righteousness and purity compel us to hide from Him. II. IT BRINGS DISENCHANTMENT AND DISILLUSIONMENT. For a little we are fascinated, beguiled, befooled; but soon there is a rude awakening. "Their webs shall not become garments," etc. (ver. 6). The mirage fades away and we discover to our dismay that there is nothing around or within us but a desert of sand and thorns. III. IT BRINGS BEWILDERMENT AND PERPLEXITY (ver. 9). We are in doubt regarding the most elementary matters of belief and behaviour. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God.—*Sin separates God and men:*—I. A DREADFUL EVIL THAT THIS PEOPLE WAS UNDER. Separation from God. II. THE PARTY AT WHOSE DOOR THE BLAME LIES, they who have made the breach. III. THE PROCURING CAUSE OF THIS EVIL, "your iniquities." (*T. Boston.*) *The dreadful efficacy of sin:*—I. WHAT IS THAT SEPARATION WHICH SIN MAKES BETWIXT GOD AND SOULS? Not a local separation, for "He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live," etc. 1. In it there is something negative; *i. e.* the Lord denies them the influences of His grace, countenance and fellowship. 2. There is something positive in it: sin kindles a fire against the soul. (1) There is a standing controversy God has against sinners (Amos iii. 3). (2) There is a pursuing of this controversy against the sinner; some positive outgoings of God's anger against the soul. II. THE GREATNESS OF THE EVIL OF SEPARATION FROM GOD, which many go so light under. Alas! many reign like king Saul, when God departed from him; but how sad a thing this is, will appear if we consider—1. What God is. Everything in God speaks terror to those that are separated from Him. (1) God is the chief good; and therefore to be separated from God is the chief evil. (2) God is all-sufficient in Himself, and to the creatures. The enjoyment of Him makes truly happy; therefore to be separated from Him is a dreadful evil. (3) The omnipotence of God. (4) The absoluteness of God. (5) God is eternal. 2. All created things are empty and unsatisfactory. 3. To be separated from God is the saddest plague out of hell. 4. It is a very hell to be separated from God. 5. Those that continue in a state of separation from God, have no quarter to which they can turn for comfort in an evil day. III. HOW SIN MAKES THIS SEPARATION BETWIXT GOD AND A SOUL. 1. There is a guilt of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to misery for his sin. 2. There is the stain of sin. (*Ibid.*) *Sin the great separator:*—I. SIN SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD AS TO PLACE. Of course it remains true of every inhabitant of earth, and even of hell, that God is not far from every one of us. But sin has blunted, has even destroyed the sense of His nearness, has led men to feel as though He were far distant. As a man's iniquities increase God seems farther and farther from him, until at last he feels that heaven is too distant for him to reach, and God too far off to hear his prayers. II. SIN SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD AS TO CHARACTER. III. SIN SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD AS TO WILL. Separation of will is the most complete of all kinds of separation. Continents and oceans may divide men, and yet they may be one in heart and aim. IV. SIN SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD AS TO INTEREST. It is to the interest of the sinner that there should be opportunity for indulgence in sin, that the punishment of sin should be removed, that the restraints of virtue should be broken down. We

may well rejoice that God's interest is with all that is the opposite of this. It is God's aim that sin should be destroyed. Hence by fearful sufferings He brands it with disgrace. But God in His wonderful love has taken means to destroy this separation, and to draw us back to Him. (*Homilist.*) *The tragic schism:*—When separation comes to pass, the force of disseverment and alienation can only be that of sin. 1. He who is the spring of life can know neither impoverishment nor limitation, and the changes and fluctuations of the universe can no more project themselves into His being than the casting of a leaf or the shedding of a blossom from the tree can impair the vital force entrenched in its roots. The heathen man will sometimes say, "The gods are growing old; they are not so ready in helping their worshippers as when we were young." An eternal Spirit is secure against such an innuendo. "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save." 2. And there can be no failure of care for our welfare or slackening off in His inclination to help us. Unless God be a fiction of the brain He must be predisposed to save and succour the people He has formed for Himself. The age-long impulse by which He draws men to religion is a sufficient proof of that. When we take into account what God really is, the chief mystery of the world is that any prayer in it should go unanswered, and the mystery is one with the mystery of iniquity itself. It was no wonder that He whose everlasting home had been in the bosom of infinite love should marvel at that which is so commonplace to us—unbelief. What a side-light does this cast upon the terrible significance of sin! It is the one thing which keeps God and His creatures apart. 3. The conditions of modern business life are sometimes adduced as an excuse for the waning spirit of prayer and the outfading consciousness of Divine help. If business does unfit its votaries for realizing God's presence and power, it can only be for one of three reasons, all alike bearing the taint of sin and justifying the declaration of the prophet. You seek unlawful ends in business, or you seek lawful ends by unlawful means, or the methods of conducting business tend to kindle within you unlawful passions. 4. We are sometimes ready to put down this tragic schism to the progress of scientific thought. Men's hearts are petrified by the new dogma that the order of the universe is unalterable, along with its godless corollary, that to pray is to fritter away time, strength, and vital force, and to vex one's own soul. Let the difficulties raised by the new science be freely allowed. Upon even devout minds these views of the uniformity of Nature and her methods, be they proven or unproven, may so act as to check the temper of prayerfulness. Temptation does take on intellectual forms as it addresses itself to thinking people. If a child were to find out that his father's estate had been signed over to trustees, and that for a certain term of years that father could not be altogether a free agent in providing for the wants of his household, all immediate expenditure being determined by some outside authority, and if on that ground the child were to break off relations with his father, would not that be the mark of a mean, depraved, repulsive character? Supposing that God had made Nature His plenipotentiary, or trustee, and for the time being had surrendered His own power of answering supplication for temporal benefits, it would surely be base in us to use that as a plea whereby to justify ourselves in restraining prayer before Him. 5. The problems of temperament are sometimes brought in to explain this tragic schism. Men palliate their callousness to prayer and their misgivings concerning its benefits by putting them down to deficiency of sentiment or imagination, matter-of-factness, poverty of the religious instinct, congenital disability answering to colour blindness in the physical realm. It is assumed, upon very slender proof, that a peculiar poise of the faculties disqualifies for enthusiastic spiritual beliefs. It may be allowed that from the intellectual standpoint people are variously endowed and equipped; but a man's religious history is not determined by the quality, condition, or specialized habits of the brain. It is simply impossible for a man to have capacity for common truth, practical righteousness, philanthropy, family life and friendship, and yet to have no capacity for converse with God, whose nature is the spring and animating principle of all these qualities. Man is religious by constitution and irreligious only by errancy of habit and practical life. Does prayer seem barren and God unresponsive and heaven very far off? It can only be explained by our lack of oneness with the Divine will and law. 6. The inscrutable methods of God's sovereignty are sometimes adduced to explain away this ominous separation referred to by the prophet. Now and again occasions arise when the Lord does seem to withdraw Himself from His people. There are inexplicable factors in God's dealings with us, but those factors belong chiefly to the sphere of providence rather than to that of grace. More often than not, it is sin which veils God and His goodness from the sad, breaking, woe-begone heart, and we shall not

get out of the gloom by closing our eyes to the explanation and assuming that this terrible silence of the Most High, this apparent indisposition to help, at the mere thought of which the heart sickens and faints, is one of the decrees of His unsearchable sovereignty. 7. This separation is often veiled from us by the illusions of the senses and the pomps of this present evil world. It needs much courage and sobriety of mind to realize the perils with which it is fraught. The form assumed by our personal sin may be so secret and subtle that it is easy for us to think that, in our case at least, this is not the malign force which separates from God and makes His presence fleeting as a dream. We have not been guilty perchance of glaring, flagitious, anti-social transgressions which provoke the reproaches of those who watch our behaviour. Yet spiritual sins may cleave to us which work portentous mischief in the religious life. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Visions which lure to destruction:*—Near the source of one of the great rivers of the East there stands a Buddhist monastery of widespread fame, built on the edge of a beetling cliff. In the chasm beneath clouds are often seen floating, upon which the pilgrims who have climbed to the shrine look down. Under certain conditions of the sun and atmosphere a magnificent phenomenon appears. The sun, greatly enlarged and begirt with coruscations of prismatic splendour, is reflected upon the screen of vapours. From the central disc shafts of gold and purple and violet pulse and throb. The devotees call the sight "the glory of Buddha," and when the prismatic marvel appears, half mad with religious frenzy, they cast themselves into the palpitating mass of colour, falling unconscious suicides into the grim gulf below, to which only vultures and jackals can approach. And the separating chasm between ourselves and God is often filled up with a meretricious pomp that disguises its tragedies, and men are again and again betrayed into self-destruction. Perhaps it is a vision of the world with its wealth and power that scintillates there, the gorgeous phantoms which passed before the eye on the mount of the temptation. All the hues of Vanity Fair shimmer beneath our feet, and we think surely we may plunge into the iridescence that seems to beckon us. Or it may be the glory of Nature spreads itself athwart the yawning gulf. She interposes the magic of her shows, entices with the glory of her stately order, usurps the nimbus of a factitious sovereignty, and takes the very place of God Himself. The gulf dividing from God is hidden by her enchantments. Or, the rainbow glories of an æsthetic religion veil the deep moral separation. Men sometimes commit ethical suicide under the cover of an ornate worship. We cultivate art, music, the devices that enthral the senses, and call the product piety, forgetting that we are in no sense at one with God. Pageants superimpose themselves upon unwelcome facts, and underneath the circles of deceitful splendour there gape gulfs of deep and irretrievable perdition. If sin is ignored, unconfessed, unforsaken, if unflattering truths are obstinately disguised, we shall find at last that our capacity for communion with God is lost and our doom is an abyss from which there can be no uplifting. (*Ibid.*) *Inconspicuous sins may hinder communion with God:*—Pathologists found difficulty in identifying the bacillus of an epidemic that has become sorrowfully familiar to us; not only because it was one of the tiniest of all microscopic organisms, but chiefly because it could not be stained with the dyes used in studying other minute forms of life. Yet what a messenger of sorrow and death it was! This hideous trifle brought swift and cruel separation to husband and wife, parent and child, lover and friend, and put the silence and deep gloom of the grave between thousands of victims and the sweet sunny homes in which they would fain have tarried. Now some sins have a criminal dye put upon them by statutory law, are branded by the damnatory force of public opinion, or show red like crimson because of the disintegrating influence they begin to exert at once upon the individual and the society to which he belongs. Other sins do not stand out in conspicuous colours. Men have no apparent interest in describing them as atrocities. Unless we are watchful and cultivate keen spiritual perceptions, these more obscure forms of sin are apt to elude our consciousness. And yet they may separate between us and our God. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 5, 6.—**They hatch cockatrice' eggs.**—*Wicked devices:*—I. THE DEVICES OF THE WICKED. 1. Like eggs—productive. 2. Like cockatrice' eggs—injurious. 3. Like spiders' webs—frail, useless. II. THEIR EFFECT. 1. Upon others—mischief, death. 2. Upon themselves—disappointment, retribution. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *The schemes of the ungodly:*—The meaning seems to be that the persons spoken of brood over and bring to maturity projects of wickedness, whose effects are almost equally fatal to those who acquiesce in them and to those who oppose them. "He that

eateth of their eggs," *i. e.* either he who enters into their schemes or he who is their victim. "That which is crushed breaketh out into a viper." Should one try to stamp out one of their diabolical plans, its deadly nature will only be the more clearly manifested. Ver. 6 is the development of the second image of ver. 5, the point of comparison being the uselessness for any good social end of the schemes devised by the ungodly. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) **And weave the spider's web.**—*Hypocritical religion*:—See the spider's web and behold in it a most suggestive picture of the hypocrite's religion. 1. It is meant to catch his prey; the spider fattens himself on flies. Foolish persons are easily entrapped by the loud professions of pretenders, and even the more judicious cannot always escape. 2. A spider's web is a marvel of skill; look at it and admire the cunning hunter's wiles. Is not a deceiver's religion equally wonderful? How does he make so barefaced a lie appear to be a truth? 3. A spider's web comes all from the creature's own bowels. Even so hypocrites find their hope and trust within themselves. 4. But a spider's web is very frail. Hypocritical cobwebs will soon come down when the broom of destruction begins its purifying work. 5. Which reminds us of one more thought, viz. that such cobwebs are not to be endured in the Lord's house. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiders' webs*:—As the spider weaveth her web to catch the smaller flies, so do they lay their plots to take the poorer sort of people, and them which are most destitute of friends. (*W. Day, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. **Their webs shall not become garments.**—*The art of weaving* is older than human history; figures drawn from it are found in the earliest literature of all nations. It is frequently employed in the Word of God to set forth the sublimest truths of life, and in the classical mythologies it occupies an even more important place. The three fates preside over the lives of men, and they practise the weaver's art. Clotho holds the threads, Lachesis introduces the warp, and the grim goddess Atropos cuts the web when the fabric of human destiny is complete. In later times we find the figure with a still wider import. The spirit of Goethe's "Faust" labours in the workshop of the spring-time to weave the garment for Nature by which God Himself may be seen by mortals. Thus in all the ages of the world the figure of the loom has commended itself as one most aptly setting forth the deepest truths of human experience. (*J. Wallace, M.A.*) *Character as a web*:—The prophet Isaiah has laid hold on the idea, now a commonplace of our thought, that all character is a web. In the case of all the web is variegated; in the case of some the piece is spoiled by rotten threads. As our days fly past they dart across the warp of the Divine purposes the woof of human action and human thought, and the marvel is that multitudes live on in brutish carelessness while the loom of life spins on. We look back on a misspent day with the wretched consolation that it will be all the same a hundred years hence. Will it? If threads missing in the web do not spoil its market value, then it may; but if one false thread ruins the whole, then life with one day misspent is by so much of less value in the sight of God. (*Ibid.*) *Hopeless weaving*:—From our text we wish to look at one or two methods of character-weaving which are doomed to miserable failure when the web of life is spun. I. There are HALF-DONE DUTIES. Multitudes perform their duty in such a way that it is but half done. In the ordinary routine of life they are always a little late, and consequently have to work with haste. Or take the higher duty of man to love God and keep His commandments. There are moments of Pisgah vision, but what weary leagues of plain are there unredeemed by any thought of God! This half-done duty is life's shuttle plied with a palsied hand, and the fabric of character is such as in the end will put the weaver to the blush. II. There are HALF-CONQUERED TEMPTATIONS. Many a man is conquered who does not fall. III. What is the secret of duties half done, of temptation half conquered? The secret is HALF-CONSECRATED LIVES. If all the provinces of the soul do not obey the Divine mandate, we need not be astonished if rebellion sometimes shows its head. When we have done our best to weave, we are not to go to heaven in our own garments. Christ has provided raiment for His people, woven on the Cross and dyed there in colours more enduring than Tyrian purple. We have to weave as those who have to prove their calling, not win it. (*Ibid.*) *Projects injurious to others are hurtful to self*:—They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them. There is nothing to be got by sin. (*M. Henry.*) *Unprofitable Weaving*:—Our text speaks of works which are inadequate to the purpose for which they are performed. An unprofitable and useless manufacture is denounced. What should we think of a manufacturer who persisted in

making a kind of cloth so flimsy and rotten that it would hardly hold together—so weak and threadbare that either it could not be made up into garments, or, if it were, they would be useless for either adornment or comfort. And how great would be our astonishment if this imprudent man actually proceeded to clothe himself with the flimsy stuff he had made! Yet such, in a moral sense, is the conduct of those who are condemned in our text. They weave a web with which they try in vain to effectually clothe themselves. The "web" is the fabric of their own righteousness, or works. The persons spoken of are they who are self-sufficient in their wickedness and pride of heart. They are unrighteous people, who think themselves righteous, or who desire to be thought so by others. But the material they produce is as flimsy as a spider's web; and it will serve for neither decency nor comfort, for neither ornament nor use. Let us think of the purposes a garment is intended to serve, and we shall be supplied with various illustrations of the utter inadequacy of self-righteousness. I. A GARMENT IS DESIGNED FOR PERSONAL COMFORT. A garment is useless, and even intolerable, unless it affords warmth and ease. We are quite unable to produce a fabric which will afford either substantial comfort or permanent peace. 1. However genuine our present righteousness might be, it would not absolve us from the guilt of past sin. 2. Our own righteousness is insufficient for comfort because it leaves untouched the passions of the unregenerate heart. 3. Our own righteousness is inadequate for comfort because it affords no effectual protection against temptation. II. THE SECOND PURPOSE A GARMENT IS INTENDED TO SERVE IS DECENCY. A garment which is ill-fitting, or of unseemly pattern, or formed of coarse and worthless material, is unpleasing to others no less, and possibly more, than to the wearer himself. And one's own righteousness—that is the righteousness which is not produced under the influence of the Holy Spirit—will no more bear the scrutiny of one's fellow-men, than would a ragged coat or a draggled and threadbare dress. Like an inferior garment, it may pass muster in the crowd, or escape criticism on a casual view, but it will not bear close inspection. A man cannot so cover himself with his own righteousness as to appear at all times decently and respectably clothed. 1. The garment is so thin that it does not hide the natural ugliness of the soul. 2. It is likewise so limited in its dimensions as to cause serious disfigurement of the life. 3. The garment of self-righteousness is undurable. III. THE GARMENT OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS INTENDED TO SECURE FOR ITS WEARER ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD. There are garments which are necessary for certain occasions, or for admission to particular places. Such was the wedding garment in the East, and such is the modern court dress. The garment of outward works is designed by the wearer to serve a similar purpose. It is intended as a recommendation to the favour of God and a passport to heaven. But it will answer neither of these ends. If we would sustain the scrutiny of God, we must be clothed in something of finer texture, of stronger substance, and of richer hue, than the flimsy and bedraggled garment of our own righteousness. 1. It will not cover us to the satisfaction of God because of its insufficient dimensions and its many flaws. 2. Nor is it in fact any real covering in the sight of God. Let us learn the worthlessness of merely outward righteousness, and the absolute necessity of repentance, regeneration, and holiness of heart. (*J. W. Keyworth.*) *Webs and garments:*—A mere web of cloth might be said to be of no practical use. It may lie on the shelves in the draper's shop for a time, but it is intended for something beyond that. The ultimate purpose in connection with it is the garments that may be made from it. It has possibilities—the possibility of garments in it—and that was intended from the first. It has not realized the intention regarding it until it is ultimately turned into garments. So when the prophet says, "Their webs shall not become garments," he is referring to the wicked plans of wicked men among the Israelites, and means that their plans would not reach the final, the complete and practical stage. Their purposes would be frustrated by a higher Hand. The words may be applied to ourselves, and in various ways. I. SOME PURPOSES ARE FRUSTRATED BECAUSE OF SOMETHING LACKING IN OURSELVES—indolence, want of energy, or want of ability to complete our purposes. II. SOME PURPOSES ARE FRUSTRATED BECAUSE OF POSITIVE HINDRANCES IN THE WAY THAT WE CANNOT SURMOUNT, AND THAT PERSONALLY WE MAY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH. It is to us one of the most inexplicable things in Providential dealing, how men who devote themselves to a great and good object, and who seem to us essential for its success, are often cut down in the mid-time of their days, just when to our eyes their presence seemed most needed. Why should it be so? No doubt we should see things differently, however, if with wider vision we could look before and after; and find that, in

higher ways than we can dream of, men whose plans seem to be frustrated are more than satisfied with the Divine mode of dealing. In the text it is wicked purposes that are referred to, and though often a good purpose seems to be checked as well, yet there will be no real failure in life's plans if we live according to our light. Working in line with God there is a deeper sense in which, instead of our webs not becoming garments, it might be said that the very stars in their courses will fight for us. The great purpose of our life will be fulfilled if we keep near to God. Conclusion: 1. This true success is, above all and first of all, an inward thing. It refers pre-eminently to the inward condition. It must begin there. 2. "We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus." Whether as to humanity as a whole, or as to individuals, that is true; all things are not yet put under, but there is ever one source of help and hope, and only one. Looking unto Jesus, if that be the attitude of our life, then it cannot be said, whatever befall, that life's purpose has failed, and in higher ways than we can tell our webs shall become garments, the beautiful and durable garments of the soul. (*J. S. Maver, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. **Their feet run to evil.**—*A picture of moral corruption:*—This verse and the first part of the following have been interwoven by Paul, in Rom. iii. 15–17, into his description of universal moral corruption. The representation of life as a road, and of one's mode of action as a manner of walking, is a common feature in gnomic compositions, where its terminology has been fully developed. From the beginning of ver. 7, one may perceive that steadfast believers, during the exile, were persecuted even to death by their fellow-countrymen who had forgotten God. The verbs "run" and "hasten" depict the delight felt in wickedness, when the conscience is completely asleep. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 9–11. **Therefore is judgment far from us.**—*Dejection and trouble the outcome of sin:*—The sorrow and dejection of the people is depicted in striking and pathetic images. It is the better mind of the community which is here expressed—its intense desire for the fulfilment of the Divine promises, its weariness through hope deferred making the heart sick. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *A sad sequence:*—"Therefore,"—on account of these sins and disorders, and not on account of Jehovah's remissness (vers. 1, 2). (*Ibid.*) **We wait for light.**—*Help for seekers of the light:*—I. DESCRIPTIVE. 1. These persons are in some degree aware of their natural darkness. They are looking for light. 2. They have a high idea of what the light is. "Brightness." 3. They have some hope that they may yet obtain this light; in fact they are waiting for it, hopefully waiting. 4. They are such as have learned to plead their case with God, for our text is a complaint addressed to the Lord Himself. 5. The person I am desirous of comforting is quite willing to lay bare his heart before God, to confess his desires whether right or wrong, and to expose his condition whether healthy or sound. II. ASSISTANCE. It shall be my happy task to assist into the light those who would fain flee from the darkness. We will do so by trying to answer the query, "How is it that I, being desirous of light, have not found it yet?" 1. You may have been seeking the light in the wrong place. You may have been the victim of the false doctrine that peace with God can be found in the use of ceremonies. It is possible, too, that you have been looking for salvation in the mere belief of a certain creed. You have thought that if you could discover pure orthodoxy, and could then consign your soul into its mould, you would be a saved man. 2. You may have sought it in the wrong spirit. Some appear to deal with God as if He were bound to give salvation; as if salvation, indeed, were the inevitable result of a round of performances, or the deserved reward of a certain amount of virtue. 3. Others have not obtained peace because they have not yet a clear idea of the true way of finding it. What thou hast to do is but to accept what Jesus has finished. 4. Perhaps thou hast not found light because thou hast sought it in a half-hearted manner. 5. Is it not possible that there may be some sin within thee which thou art harbouring to thy soul's peril? 6. It may be that you have only sought peace with God occasionally. 7. The great reason after all, why earnest souls do not get speedy rest lies in this, that they are disobedient to the one plain Gospel precept, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. III. A few words by way of AROUSING. What an unhappy state is thine! You have been in the dark year after year, when the sun is shining, the sweet flowers are blooming, and everything waiting to lead thee forth with gladness. What joys you lose by being an unbeliever! What sin you are daily committing! for you are daily an unbeliever! Unless Jesus Christ be your shield and help you are undone! IV. ENCOURAGEMENT.

There are many around you who have trusted Jesus and found light. They once suffered your disappointments, but have now found rest to their souls. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **And judgment is turned away backward.**—*National sin:*—The sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgments, when it is not restrained by public justice. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 16–19. **And He saw that there was no man.**—*God, man's great Redeemer.*—Do not let us suppose this is mere poetry. Conceive what inspires it,—the great truth that in the Infinite there is a heart to throb for men, and a will to strike for them. This is what the writer desires to proclaim, and what we believe the Spirit of God moved his poor human lips to give their own shape to,—the simple truth that there is One, however hidden He may be to men's eyes, who feels for men, who feels hotly for men, and whose will is quick and urgent to save them. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) "*He wondered that there was no intercessor*":—"He stood aghast that there was no one interposing." The common version ("wondered"), though substantially correct, is too weak to express the full force of the Hebrew word, which strictly means to be desolate, and is used in reference to persons for the purpose of expressing an extreme degree of horror and astonishment. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Prophetic certainty:*—That the whole description refers to a future event can hardly be questioned. The perfects in this verse (ver. 16) and the next are those of prophetic certainty. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **For He put on righteousness.**—*Self-manifestations of God's holy nature:*—Just as in Eph. vi. the manifold self-manifestations of the inner life of the soul are symbolized under each of the different pieces of armour, so, under the pieces of Jehovah's armour there are set forth the manifold self-manifestations of His holy nature, formed out of wrath and love combined. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The armour of the redeeming God:*—Judiciously and beautifully is the inexorable justice of God compared to the impenetrable brazen coat-of-mail; His gladdening salvation to the protecting helmet glittering afar; His vengeance, having many modes of inflicting effective chastisement, to the bright-coloured garments over the coat-of-mail; and His wrathful jealousy to the fiery red military cloak. No weapon is mentioned—neither sword nor bow—for His arm, and this alone, procures Him help. (*Ibid.*) *The Head of the Church a mighty Hero:*—1. "He put on righteousness as a breastplate." He assumed the exercise of that right which appertained to Him, of vindicating His Church from the hands of their enemies, of rendering them victorious over their oppressors, and of restoring them to liberty and tranquillity. Righteousness peculiarly belongeth to him, His heart is set on advancing its interests; it is not more conspicuous in the equity of His laws than in the dispensations of His providence, whereby He repays fully to His adversaries, and exalts His upright servants to happiness and comfort. This righteousness He is said to have put on, so as openly to show that it belonged to Him, and that every hostile weapon directed against Him and those He was going to avenge, should rebound on themselves with irresistible force. Furnished with righteousness for a covering, the Most Mighty went forth with invincible courage to attack His enemies, well knowing that all their efforts were incapable of wounding Him, or of preventing Him from obtaining the victory. 2. "And a helmet of salvation on His head." The Son of God is represented having on a helmet of salvation because it affords Him perfect security from all the insults that are aimed at Him by His foes, and preserves Him in complete safety when contending for conquest with those that rise up against Him. 3. "And He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing." The expression may refer to the under garment that was anciently worn by some Eastern nations below their coat or cloak. The garments of vengeance may denote the sword, the bow, and the spear, with the other instruments that were to be employed in executing awful vengeance on His persecuting foes, and in showing Himself strong in behalf of those who trust in His name. These He put on when He determined immediately to avenge the wrongs done to Himself and His Church. 4. "And was clad with zeal as a cloak." Zeal is not properly a detached principle, but it is a mixed affection, combined of love and displeasure, manifested by vigorous exertions to advance the welfare of the beloved object, by every proper expedient, to express displeasure against those who have injured the persons in whose happiness it is interested. Properly speaking, it is not a single passion, but an essential ingredient necessary to the lively exercise of

every other affection. When attributed to Jehovah, it denotes His tender regard for the interests of His kingdom and glory, and His just indignation of everything that opposes their establishment and prosperity. With this zeal He was clad as with a cloak worn by the warriors of ancient times. The words may import that the Lord God would publicly demonstrate, by His interposition in favour of His servants, that He was truly solicitous to promote their safety and happiness; and, by the execution of righteous vengeance upon their enemies, that He would not permit those who disturbed the peace of His Church to remain unpunished. (*R. Macculloch.*) **Clad with zeal as a cloke.**—*The best cloak:*—The solitary champion who is here spoken of is the Prince of the house of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. When a man has all other excellences, then zeal is still needed to elevate and perfect his entire manhood. Behold the altar, built of unhewn stones, and after God's own law; behold the wood laid thereon; see the victim slain and the blood flowing; but you cannot make a sacrifice without fire. Behold in the altar the figure of the man; he has faith, courage, love, consecration; but if he lacks the fire of fervent zeal his life will be a failure. I. ZEAL IS TO BE REGARDED AS A CLOAK THAT COVERS ALL. The Christian man is to wear zeal as we wear an outward garment which covers all the rest of our garments—a flowing robe which encompasses the entire person. 1. Zeal is all enveloping: zeal should envelop all the powers of the Christian. He is to invest himself with faith and love, with patience and perseverance, with hope and joy; but zeal must be over all these. We are not to be zealous with one part of ourselves, nor zealous in one particular duty only, nor zealous at one special season; but to be altogether zealous, for all Christ's work, for all Christ's truth: and at all times zealous not only in one good thing, but in all good things. 2. We are to wear holy zeal as a cloak, in order to preserve the different parts of our soul from danger. Zeal is preserving. Zeal is to wrap up the whole man, so that when he is subject to a furious hail of persecution, or a biting wind of poverty, or a torrent of down-pouring griefs, the pilgrim to the skies may hold on his way, and bid all weathers brave defiance. 3. Zeal is comforting, even as the cloak when wrapped about the traveller in the snow-storm. The man who is possessed by an irresistible passion for carrying out his life-work, will gird this gracious ardour well around him, and let the snow-flakes come as they may, they will only fall, as it were, into a furnace, and will melt before they can injure. 4. We may regard zeal as a cloak by reason of its adorning a man's character. Many a person looks all the more comely because of the garment in which he has arrayed himself. There is no more becoming garment to the Christian when he possesses all the virtues than an all-enveloping zeal. 5. We must take care to put on zeal as a cloak and not as a hood. Nobody wears his cloak over his head, and yet I have known some persons whose zeal has blindfolded their judgment. Zeal, like fire, is "a good servant, but a bad master." 6. Zeal is a cloak, and therefore not intended to supersede the other graces. We do not put on our great coats and leave off all our other clothes. 7. Zeal is a cloak, and therefore we are not to regard it as an extraordinary robe to be worn only occasionally on high days and holidays. Zeal for God should be exhibited in workshops, should be worn in the market-house, in the senate, or wherever we may labour. Since the storm is always on, and we are always pilgrims, it will be like the cloak which we cannot bear to lay aside. 8. While I say that zeal is not everything, recollect that the cloak covers everything, and do not let your zeal be such a scanty thing that it will only hang like a girdle round your loins. Remember our Lord put on zeal. While the Christian religion is an internal thing, there is no religion in the world which shows itself so much externally. II. HOW OUR LORD EXHIBITED THIS ZEAL. 1. In His earliest childhood you have tokens of His inward zeal. "Wist ye not," etc.? 2. In after life you see His burning zeal in leaving the comforts of life. 3. His very dress showed His zeal, because it was not ostentatious, but in every way suitable for incessant labour and humble service. 4. He showed His earnestness in persevering in His work under all manner of rebuffs. 5. And, as a clearer proof of His zeal still, all the blandishments of the world could not attract Him. 6. Look at His incessant labours. 7. In His preaching you see His zeal. 8. Probably you see His zeal most of all in His prayers, for a man's intensity of heart may eminently be judged of by his secret devotion before God. 9. He proved His zeal again by giving up Himself. 10. Observe what His zeal was made of. (1) It was zeal for God. (2) Zeal for truth. (3) Zeal for souls. III. WHAT WAS IT THAT THE ZEAL OF CHRIST FED UPON? 1. Christ's zeal was based upon a defined principle. He had of old said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." He had set his heart upon a great purpose,

He had weighed it, counted the cost, looked at it on all sides, and now He was not to be turned from it. 2. The zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ was occasioned by intense love. He loved His Father; He could not, therefore, but do His will. He loved His people; He could not, therefore, do otherwise than seek their good. Oh, how He loved the souls of men! It was a passion with Him. 3. The zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ had an eye to the recompense. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." 4. Our Lord Jesus Christ was so zealous because He had a greater spiritual discernment than you and I have. We are not zealous because we cannot see. We can see these houses, these streets, and this money. We can hear those people's tongues, and we can look at these creature comforts. But our ears are as though they were stopped up with wax, and our eyes as though they were blinded to better things. When Jesus was here He saw angels, and He beheld the spirits of men; He looked upon men, not as flesh and blood, but as immortals. Best of all, He saw God. He could say, "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand I shall not be moved." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 19. **When the enemy shall come in like a flood.**—*Moral invasions:*—These words suggest—I. THE MORAL INVASION OF HUMAN SOULS. 1. The soul has an arch enemy. This enemy is called by different names. The old serpent, the devil, Satan, roaring lion, etc. He is characterized by great power, malignity, craft. He has mighty armies under his power. Principalities and powers, etc. 2. This arch enemy sometimes makes a tremendous onslaught. "Cometh in like a flood." There are times in the human soul when evil seems to rush on it as an overwhelming torrent. II. THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GUARDIAN OF HUMAN SOULS. "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The soul that gives itself up to Divine guardianship has an impregnable fortress. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is stronger than the enemy. 2. The Spirit of the Lord is wiser than the enemy. The Spirit of the Lord has an intellect, that overrules, battles, subordinates all the workings of the foe. He makes his hellish discord swell the harmonies of the universe. 3. The Spirit of the Lord is nearer to the soul than the enemy. The soul does not live in the devil, but the soul lives in the Spirit; the soul can live without the devil, the soul cannot live without the Spirit. (1) How great is man! The objects both of hellish and of heavenly interests and efforts. (2) How critical is destiny! We are in an enemy's territory. (*Homilist.*) *The great enemy's opposition overcome:*—I. THE ENEMY. 1. Worldliness. (1) Fashion. (2) Business cares. (3) Pleasures. 2. Political sins. (1) Party spirit. (2) License of vice. II. CHARACTER OF THE ENEMY'S OPPOSITION. 1. Active. "Shall come in," etc. 2. Vehement. "Like a flood." III. THE ENEMY CONFRONTED. "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." 1. In the faithful, earnest preaching of the Gospel. 2. In the social services of the Church. 3. In the godly example of Christians. (*J. S. Clomer.*) *The standard of heaven lifted up against the powers of hell and their auxiliaries:*—I. AN ATTACK made by hell and its auxiliaries upon the kingdom and interest of Christ. "The enemy shall come in like a flood." Notice—1. By whom the attack is made. "The enemy." The Church of God, or His saints in this world, have many enemies. They are expressed in the singular number, because of their unity in their designs against Christ and His kingdom, and because they attack under one principal leader and commander, namely, the god of this world, whose kingdom Christ came to overthrow. 2. The manner of the enemy's attack. He comes in like a flood, with great violence and noise, as though he would sweep away all clean before him (Rev. xii. 15). It is no unusual thing, in Scripture, to represent the irruptions of hell and its armies upon the Church of God under the notion of a rapid flood or river, which threatens the ruin of everything that stands in its way (Ps. xciii. 3). 3. The progress of the enemy, or how far the attack may be carried. He shall "come in": he shall not stay without the walls or borders, like an enemy laying siege, and going no further; but he shall "come in," and "overflow even to the neck." Satan has a party within the Church to take him by the hand; yea, he has a party within the very heart of the elect to side with him. 4. The certainty of all this. It is not a peradventure. "The enemy shall come in like a flood." II. THE REPULSE given to the enemy after all his progress. "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Where again we may notice—1. By whom the repulse is given. "The Spirit of the Lord." It is not by the might of the Church, it is not by any created strength, but by "My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." 2. How the repulse is given. It is by "lifting up a standard against him." By the

"standard" I understand Christ, who is not only a standard-bearer "among ten thousand" (Cant. v. 10), but the Standard or ensign itself (Is. xi. 10). By the "lifting up" of the standard I understand the displays of the glory of Christ in a Gospel dispensation, accompanied with the efficacy of the Spirit of the Lord. 3. The repulse itself given to the enemy of the Spirit of the Lord. He is "put to flight" (*Marg.*); or, as Calvin reads it, the Spirit of the Lord shall drive him back like the waters of Jordan, which were driven back towards their fountain, when they stood in the way of Israel's entry upon the possession of the promised land. 4. The certainty of this promise of driving back the enemy—it is not a may-be, but a shall-be. (*E. Erskine.*) *The enemy of the people of God:*—I. WHO IS THE ENEMY THAT COMES IN LIKE A FLOOD? The devil, called sometimes "the god of this world." 1. Satan has a strong party within, to wit, indwelling sin. 2. The world without us is another main auxiliary of hell—the profits, pleasures and preferments of the world, called by the apostle, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." II. WHY THIS ENEMY IS LIKENED TO A FLOOD. 1. Because of the noise, made by error, persecution, defections, and violences of all kinds. The poor soul is many times put in such confusion, through the noise of these mighty waters, that it cannot hear the voice of God either in His Word or providences. 2. Because of their multitude. 3. Because of their unity in bending all one way in their opposition against Christ and His cause. 4. Floods are mighty, violent and rapid in their motion. 5. They are of a sweeping nature, and are ready to hurl down everything that is not well fixed. 6. A flood is in a continual motion; so the actings of sin and Satan and the world, against Christ and His cause, are incessant. III. THE PROGRESS OF THE ENEMY. How far may he come in? 1. The enemy may come in within the borders of Zion (Mic. v. 5, 6). 2. The enemy comes in, not only within the borders, but even into the palaces of Zion, her public assemblies for divine worship (Job i. 6). 3. The enemy may come into the pulpits of the Church by an erroneous and corrupt ministry (Jude 4). 4. The enemy may come into the judicatories of the Church, which are the thrones of judgment; so far may the enemy come in as to influence those judicatories to join hands with the spoilers and oppressors of the people of God, instead of defending them. 5. The enemy may come into the dwellings of Jacob. The devil lodgeth in the house of the wicked, and he may come in and work much mischief in the house of a godly David. 6. He may come into your closets, and go along with you to your knees, when you would be alone with God. 7. The enemy may come into your very heart. IV. THE CERTAINTY OF ALL THIS. 1. Plain Scripture testimony (Rev. ii. 10). 2. The state of the believer in this world—a militant state. 3. The experience of the saints of God in all ages. V. INFERENCES. 1. This world is not the believer's resting-place. If it were, of all men he would be the most miserable. 2. See, hence, why it is the believer frequently expresseth such longing desire to be away. 3. See, hence, the need that we have of Christ in his kingly office, to subdue, restrain, and conquer all His and our enemies. 4. See, hence, encouragement to poor tossed and tempted believers. Though the enemy come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. (*Ibid.*) *Encouragement:*—1. Thy enemies are God's as well as thine. 2. The Lord of hosts is with thee: God is upon thy side. 3. The enemy is already defeated and baffled by thy glorious Head and General; thou hast only a shattered enemy to grapple with. 4. There are many triumphing in glory, against whom the floods did run with as great violence as they do now against thee. 5. The battle will soon be over. 6. The word of command is given by the glorious General, "Fight the good fight of faith, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong." (*Ibid.*) *The enemy coming in as a flood:*—1. He sometimes casts out a flood of error; he studies to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, and to turn men away from the pure and precious truths of God. 2. Sometimes the enemy comes in with a flood of open persecution. 3. Sometimes he comes in with a flood of manifold corruptions upon the visible Church. Sometimes he studies to corrupt the worship of God by superstition, mingling in ceremonies of man's inventions with the pure ordinances of Divine institution. Sometimes he breaks in upon the government and discipline of the Church, attempting to introduce schemes of government not warranted by the Word of God. Sometimes he comes in with a flood of profanity corrupting the lives of professors, to the scandal of religion; sometimes with a flood of neutrality and indifferency about the things of God, under the colour of moderation. (*Ibid.*) *Temptation overcome:*—I. THE CONFLICT. "The enemy shall come in like a flood." **It is a startling metaphor.** Away up on the hills there is a lake or reservoir dammed

up. Suddenly the barrier breaks; and there comes a great rush of water down the hillside upon the unsuspecting valley beneath, sweeping away before it the hay-ricks, the stables of the cattle, the hovels of the poor, and the mansions of the great, overwhelming all life in one common watery grave, leaving presently, when it is passed, a desert where there had bloomed a garden of the Lord. Evil is always imminent just as the reservoir is always threatening. Not to watch against it, not sometimes to lift the eye to see whether the barrier holds, not to know that you are in danger, is insensate folly. But there are special crises of temptation comparable to the moment when the barrier breaks and the water pours down upon the land. So is it with the temptation of despair. So it is when we are tempted to sudden passion. Is this not true of the evil in society around us? The dragon has been pouring forth streams of water to sweep away the Word of God upon our world. It was so in the days of Pagan persecution; it was so in the days of mediæval darkness; it was so just before Wyclif, our morning star, and Luther, the minor sun, protested against the evils of their time; it was so at the end of the eighteenth century, when the parsons were dissolute and drunken and fox-hunting; and when Socinian heresy filled Nonconformist pulpits, and when the masses of the people were drenched in stupidity and sin. Such times as these, when the enemy comes in like a flood, recur with periodicity in the history of men. We do well, then, to confess our impotence. You cannot resist that flood by your resolutions, by your pledges, by your endeavours; you may as well throw up your hands at once and cry with Jehoshaphat, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." At such times we may always count upon God. II. THE AUGUST AND LONELY WARRIOR depicted in the text. It would seem almost in this chapter as though He was like a warrior resting. He has put off His helmet and His breastplate, and divested Himself of His garments. But suddenly He sees the encroachment of the enemy over the lonely spirit or over the world. He steps forward and wins. He sees that there is none to help; He wonders that there is no intercessor, therefore His arm brings salvation. Mark that word—the arm of the living Christ brings salvation to man when no one else can help him. III. OUR FATAL LIMITATIONS. Why is it that we are not always conquerors? The answer comes in verses 1–3. There is some fatal hindrance in your life that saps Christ's power. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The standard uplifted in the face of the foe:*—I. We shall take the general statement of the text as referring to THE CONFLICT WHICH IS RAGING IN THE CHRISTIAN'S INNER MAN. 1. It is well for us distinctly to understand the position of the Christian. This is not the land of our triumph, neither is this the period of our rest. There is one whose name is called "the enemy," the "evil one"; he is the leader among your adversaries; hating God with all his might, he hates that which he sees of God in you. 2. The text leads us to look for seasons when this position will be more than ordinarily perilous. 3. It will be well for you who know the spiritual conflict to be thoroughly conscious of your own utter impotence against this terrific danger. What can a man do against a flood? 4. The text, after having plainly bidden us thoroughly realize our position, and after suggesting to us our weakness, bids us turn to our only help, a Helper mysterious but Divine. 5. We have then to fall back as to our present difficulty, whatever it may be, upon spiritual power. If the battle of salvation were to be fought by man alone, then you and I might throw down sword and shield and despairingly give it all up, but when we understand that the Spirit of God has laid bare His holy arm to save us, we are not afraid of the worst moment in the fight. 6. Let us now take two or three instances in which this great truth is conspicuous. This is true of a soul under conviction of sin. After conversion it frequently happens, and especially to those who have been guilty of gross sin before conversion, that temptation comes in with unusual force. Another case sometimes occurs to a Christian, when it is not so much enticement to sin as temptation to doubt. II. Let us now turn to THE HOLY WAR WITHOUT US. The Christian Church is too conspicuous an object of Divine love not to be the butt of the malice of the powers of darkness. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *In time of flood:*—These heartening words were spoken to exiles who were preparing to return to the homeland. When they lifted their eyes to the possibilities of return they seemed to gaze upon range after range of accumulating difficulties which would obstruct their journey home. As often as the prophet proclaimed their deliverance they proclaimed their fears. Their fears were laid one by one, but as soon as one was laid another arose! The enemies on the right hand and the left hand, what about them? The hostile peoples will accept their chance, and will come down upon the returning company in destructive array!

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." We, too, are exiles returning to the homeland. We, too, have been in the dark realms of captivity, and by His redeeming grace our eyes have been lifted toward the better country. And we, too, are full of uncertainties and fears. There is a desert to traverse, a wilderness to cross, waters to pass through, mountains to climb, and we know not how we may safely reach our journey's end. And particularly are we beset by the enemy, who suddenly and unexpectedly roars down upon our path. But if we have the fears, ours, too, are the promises. Between the enemy and ourselves there shall be erected the standard of the Lord. 1. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood." The figure is surely taken from the river-beds of their native land. They had looked upon the dry, bleached ravines in time of drought, when scarcely a rivulet lisped down its rocky course. And then the rain had fallen on the hills, or the snow had melted upon the distant mountains, and the waters had torn down like a flood. I have picnicked away up in the solitudes of the higher Tees, when there was only a handful of water passing along, a little stream which even a child could cross. And once I saw what the natives call the "roll" coming away in the distance. Great rains had fallen upon the heights, and this was their issue; in a moment the quiet stream became a roaring torrent, and shouted along in thunderous flood. That, I think, is the figure of my text.. Now, what are some of these flood times in life when the enemy comes against us in overwhelming power? (1) There is the flood of passion. Floods always destroy something valuable and beautiful. And so it is with the flood of passion that sweeps through the soul. It always damages the life through which it flows. Some seed of the kingdom, just beginning to germinate, is washed out of the ground. Some tender growth is impaired or destroyed, some little plant of meekness, or gentleness, or faith, or hope, or love. Even onlookers can frequently see the ruin; and to the Lord the fruitful place must become a desert. (2) Sometimes the flood is in the form of a great sorrow, and we are engulfed by it. There is a sorrow appointed of the Almighty, but it is never ordained to hurt or destroy. And yet how often this particular flood, rushing into a life, works havoc with spiritual things. In one of our churches a little while ago a flood occurred, and the two things that were injured were the heating apparatus and the organ. I could not but think of the destructiveness wrought in the soul by the gathering waters of sorrow. Very frequently they put out the fires of geniality, and they silence the music and the song. And so it is with all the perilous waters that arise in human life. (3) Sometimes the flood gathers from a multitudinous contribution of petty cares. Now, whenever a flood in the life damages a life the work is the work of the devil. When I am tempted into overflowing passion, or into excessive sorrow, or into overwhelming care, it is the work of the enemy. I think that if we could realize this we should be greatly helped in these perilous and frequently recurring seasons. If we could only practise our eyes so as to see in the tempting circumstance the face of the evil one we should be less inclined to the snare. 2. "The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him." King Canute had his regal chair carried down to the flowing tide, and he commanded the waters to retreat. The waters paid no heed, and the mighty flood advanced. But our King raises His standard against the threatening flood, and the retreat is absolutely assured. Have you noticed that wonderfully suggestive passage in the Book of Revelation where a promise is made of help in the time of flood? "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away at the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." That great promise has been abundantly confirmed in countless lives. Even the earth itself is our ally in contending with the foe. The beauties of nature will help us to contend with the forces of evil desire. But we have more than nature as our defence; we have the Lord of nature, the Lord in nature, not so much the supernatural as the Spirit who pervades nature and all things. And so, too, it is in the flood times of sorrow. The Spirit of the Lord will engage for us, "lest we be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Have I not seen sorrow come into a life, and it has been entirely a minister of good and never of ill? The devil has not got hold of it, and used it as a destructive flood. It has been a minister of irrigation rather than destruction, and in the moist place of tears beautiful ferns have grown, the exquisite graces of compassion and long-suffering and peace. "The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard!" Well, then, let Him do it. Do not let us attempt to do it for ourselves. Let us hand it over to Him. "Undertake Thou for me, O Lord." The life of faith just consists in a quiet, conscious, realizing trust in the

all-willing and all-powerful Spirit of God. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *An overpowering manifestation of God*:—We explain the passage thus: Jehovah will come like a river, one hemmed in, which a wind of Jehovah (*i. e.* a violent tempest) rolls along in rapid course. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) **The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.**—*The opposing standard*:—I. THE STANDARD-BEARER. "The Spirit of the Lord." II. THE STANDARD. Christ. He is fitly resembled to a standard on the following accounts. 1. The standard is a signal of war. When Christ descended to this lower world, and came upon an expedition of war against the god of this world, and his usurped empire over the children of men, this war was proclaimed (Gen. iii. 15). 2. A standard is a signal of peace. When peace is proclaimed the white flag or ensign is displayed. As the appearance of God in the nature of man was a signal of war against hell, death and sin; so it was a signal of peace to man upon earth. 3. A standard is an ensign of victory. So a risen and living Redeemer is a signal of His victory over the powers of hell. 4. A standard is a signal of gathering. When the standard is set up, the army is to gather, volunteers are to be enlisted. The manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and the revelation of Him in the Gospel, is a signal to lost sinners to shake off the tyrannical yoke of sin and Satan, that they may, under Christ's conduct, recover their ancient liberty (Gen. xlix. 10; Is. xi. 10). 5. A standard is for direction and order; when the army is to march, the standard goes before, and the soldiers know whereaway to move by the motion of their standard. III. THE LIFTING UP OF THIS BLESSED STANDARD. 1. The first uplifting of it was in the eternal counsel of Heaven, before ever the foundation of the world was laid (Prov. viii. 23). 2. It was lifted up in the first promise (Gen. iii. 15). 3. In the actual incarnation, obedience and death of the Son of God. 4. By the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and His exaltation at the right hand of the Majesty on high. 5. In the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel. 6. When there is any remarkable appearance for Christ and His cause, in a Church or nation, in opposition to any of the works of the devil. 7. When God in His providence breaks and baffles wicked and blood-thirsty persecutors, who were making havoc of His Church, granting them respite and deliverance from trouble. 8. This royal Standard is lifted up by the Spirit of the Lord in the morning of conversion, when through discoveries of the glory of Christ, the soul is determined to make a surrender of its heart, and to lift up the everlasting doors, that this King of glory may come in. 9. The Spirit of the Lord lifts up the Standard in every renewed manifestation and discovery of the glory of Christ, especially after a dark night of desertion, temptation, and despondency. IV. WHENCE IS IT THAT THE LIFTING UP OF THE STANDARD, OR THE DISPLAYING OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, GIVES A REPULSE TO THE ENEMY, OR DRIVES HIM BACK? 1. The displaying of the glory of Christ by the Spirit of the Lord, sets faith in a lively exercise, which is the great engine whereby we are enabled to overcome Satan, the world, and all our enemies. 2. By displays of the glory of Christ, love is inflamed. 3. Displays of the glory of Christ inspire the soul with courage and strength to oppose the enemy, when he comes in like a flood. 4. Displays of the glory of Christ, by the Word and Spirit of the Lord, dispirit the enemy, though coming in like a flood. (*E. Erskine.*) *The Church's power*:—See, hence, what it is that makes a Church "terrible as an army with banners," to the powers of hell, and the wicked of the world. It is not carnal wisdom and policy; it is not a yielding to the humours of men in the matters of Christ; it is not a squaring our conduct according to the wisdom of this world: no, it is the presence of the Spirit of the Lord, and a following the standard of the Word, which He has given for "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths." (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 20, 21. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion.—*The Redeemer coming to His Church*:—I. THE PERSON OF WHOM THE FATHER SPEAKS, AND HIS COMING. 1. "The Redeemer," the kinsman, who, by assuming our nature, is nearly related to us (Heb. ii. 11, 17). To Him, as our kinsman, the right of redemption belongs. 2. "Shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob." The coming which is here spoken of is for the above purposes, and not chiefly His coming in the flesh, which does not so well suit the context. It is His spiritual coming which is meant; His coming in His kingdom. To the Jews, as a people, to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob," as the LXX read it, and St. Paul in Rom. xi. 26. To His Church in general, often called Zion, Jacob, and Israel; to introduce the millennium, and spread religion through all the world (Rev. xix. 11-16). To the hearts of His people (John xiv. 18, 19, 23; Rev. iii. 20). Then have we "Christ in us the hope

of glory;" Christ "dwelling in our hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 14, 17; Gal. ii. 20, 21). II. THE BLESSINGS CONSEQUENT ON HIS COMING IN THESE SENSES. "My Spirit that is upon Thee, and My words which I have put in Thy mouth, shall not depart out of Thy mouth," etc. These are the words of the Father to the Redeemer. III. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THESE BLESSINGS ARE PROMISED; THE WAY IN WHICH THEY ARE OBTAINED; AND THE CERTAINTY OF OBTAINING THEM IN THAT WAY. They are promised to those that are "in Jacob," members of Christ's Church. To those that "turn from transgression." To those who are the "seed" of Christ by faith (Gal. iii. 9, 26). The certainty of obtaining them may be found in God's Covenant. (*J. Benson. D.D.*)

CHAPTER LX.

VERS. 1–12. **Arise, shine; for thy light is come.**—*The glory of the spiritual Israel:*—Having repeatedly and fully shown that the national pre-eminence of Israel was not to be perpetual, that the loss of it was the natural consequence and righteous retribution of iniquity, and that their loss did not involve the destruction of the true Church or spiritual Israel, the prophet now proceeds to show that, to the latter, the approaching change would be a glorious and blessed one. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Isaiah lx. is the spiritual counterpart of a typical Eastern day*, with the dust laid and the darts taken out of the sunbeams,—a typical Eastern day in the sudden splendour of its dawn, the completeness and apparent permanence of its noon, the spaciousness it reveals on sea and land, and the barbaric profusion of life, which its strong light is sufficient to flood with glory. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Sunrise in the East:*—In the East the sun does not rise; the word is weak for an arrival almost too sudden for twilight. In the East the sun leaps above the horizon. You do not feel that he is coming, but that he is come. This first verse is suggested by the swiftness with which he bursts upon an Eastern city, and the shrouded form does not, as in our twilight, slowly unwrap itself, but "shines" at once, all plates and points of glory. Then the figure yields: for Jerusalem is not merely one radiant point in a world equally lighted by the sun, but is herself Jehovah's unique luminary. (*Ibid.*) "*Thy light is come*":—The perfect tenses are used from the ideal standpoint of the future. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Light breaking on the mountains:*—Any one who has spent much time among mountains will appreciate the imagery. Around is absolute blackness; the valleys are in gloom; trees, rivers, towns have been obscured; nothing is visible but that dim shaft of granite rising into the silence of the sky. Suddenly we may imagine a spirit's voice crying, "The light has come." Instantly there is a glow on the mountain—trees, rivers, towns begin to take shape; the whole world has changed. The point to be observed here is that the light was from God. The city was exhorted to be in a condition in which the glory of God might be reflected from it. The chapter describes the degradation of the rest of the world, the effect of the light on other peoples, how they would be attracted toward it; and contains near the end this outburst of victorious joy: "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." This prophecy was never literally fulfilled, and yet hundreds of years later a light did pour itself upon Mount Zion; it shone on the thickest darkness of the nations, and unto it ever since the people have been attracted. That prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. He is the Light. (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*) *The Gospel era:*—I. THE GOSPEL ERA IS DISTINGUISHED BY A SPECIAL REVELATION OF DIVINE GLORY. The light that has come to the world is the glory of the Lord. What is "the glory of the Lord"? We take the answer which the Eternal gave to the request of Moses, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." The reply was not, "I will show thee the infinitude of My possessions, the boundlessness of My dominions, the almightiness of My power, the immeasurable depths of My wisdom," but, "I will cause all My goodness to pass before thee." The Gospel is a wonderful revelation of God's goodness, in the form of amazing mercy towards a guilty world. 1. The glory of His goodness is seen in the gift of His Son. "He spared not His own Son," etc. 2. The glory of His goodness is seen in the entire history of His Son. All the compassion, the tender love and mercy, which Christ displayed when on earth, were the reflected rays of Infinite goodness.

II. THE GOSPEL ERA IMPOSES A SPECIAL OBLIGATION UPON THE WORLD. "Arise, shine." 1. Arise. Do not sleep while the rays of Divine goodness are streaming on you. Arise to thought, to penitence, to gratitude, to worship. Arise, discharge the duties and enjoy the advantages of a day flooded with the sun of mercy. 2. Shine. Reflect the rays of this goodness. Let this love of God be so "shed abroad in thy heart," that it stream forth its radiance in thy every action, and bless the circle in which thou livest. Do not be as an opaque body, obstructing the rays and throwing a shadow over thy sphere; but be a mirror, to reflect every falling beam. (*Homilist.*) *Christ the light of the world*:—The words of the text comprise an exhortation to "arise" and "shine"; and a reason to enforce it,—"thy light is come, the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." I. THE REASON. There is such a connection between ignorance and darkness, that the one is constantly put for the other in Scripture. If ignorance is justly termed darkness, so knowledge is properly compared to light. At the dawn of day, the traveller takes fresh courage; he perceives the path in which he should go, and proceeds on it rejoicing. In the same manner religious knowledge enlightens a man as to his true business in this life, and sets him to work out his salvation. And Christ is the Sun which sends forth this religious knowledge. 1. The sun, when it rises in the morning, dispels all clouds and mists and dews, and shows every object in its true colours. So, without that light which Christ has furnished by His Gospel, we cannot perceive those truths which it is most needful we should perceive. 2. The sun, when it shines above us, does more than enlighten every object. It nourishes, it invigorates. Without it, the sickly plant droops and decays, and brings no fruit to perfection. And the effect of the sun upon outward nature is a striking emblem of the influence of Christ upon the heart. In Him is life, vigorous, spiritual life; and the life is the light of men. II. THE EXHORTATION. "Arise, shine." 1. When the sun rises, and scatters the mists of night, he gives a summons to mankind to rise also, and set themselves to the discharge of their various duties. In the same manner, the appearance of Christ in the world is a summons to all who hear of His revelation, to "arise." To awake out of the sleep of ignorance, the sleep of thoughtlessness, the sleep of sin, which are, in truth, the sleep of death; and to apply themselves, before "the night cometh in which no man can work," to the business which God has appointed them to perform both for themselves and for Him. 2. The text requires that you not only "arise," but that you "shine." That Christ has risen in the world is nothing, unless He illuminates your hearts also. When the sun is up, and shines brightly upon any object, that which before was dark shines too; receives a brilliancy not its own, not natural to it. So is it likewise, when Christ illuminates the heart. It takes a new colouring, a light which by nature it had not. Enlightened by the Gospel, the simple becomes wise, and acquires the knowledge which is most truly valuable—the knowledge of duty towards God and man. Enlightened by the Gospel, he who was selfish and covetous is made liberal, and abounds in the feelings of brotherly kindness, and in the works of charity. Enlightened by the Gospel, he who was sensual becomes temperate and pure, and "lets his moderation be known unto all men." The "lover of this world" becomes a "lover of God," and "sets his affections on things above." In this way the light which has shone upon them is reflected in their conduct, and is visible in their whole character. The sun shines; but some objects still continue dark and gloomy. Between them and the sun's light other objects interpose, and prevent his beams from shining upon them. And so it is in the world of grace. (*J. B. Sumner, M.A.*) *The dawning of God's light and its awakening call*:—I. THE DAWNING OF THE LIGHT. "Thy light is come." If the light is always near, but the darkness is in man's heart and the blindness in his soul, we have to ask how the darkness passes away, and to point out the manner in which the glory of God dawns upon it, in order that we may see why its dawning is a summons to arise and shine. There are three requisites for its dawning—three stages in the history of the soul's enlightenment. 1. Spiritual penitence. 2. Spiritual penitence must pass into spiritual love. 3. Spiritual love necessitates spiritual prayer. II. THE AWAKENING CALL. "Arise, shine." That summons is the inevitable result of the dawning of the light. When God is felt to be near a man thus—in penitence, love, and prayer, that man is imperatively bound to reflect the glory which has risen in his heart; to bear witness of the light which has pierced and transformed his soul. Let us again observe that this is also based on a great principle, viz. the deepest emotion in a man's nature must reveal itself in his life. I proceed to show the way in which the glory of the Lord thus manifests itself in life. 1. In the majesty of holiness. 2. In the beauty of unselfishness. 3. In the earnestness of your efforts for men. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*)

The everlasting light:—I. THE VOICE SPEAKS TO INDIVIDUALS. How few even realize their possibilities. We have had religious training, we have been taught to consider all questions as they appear in relation to God, we have grown up in a religious atmosphere, and yet the consciousness that no man is a true man until he reflects Jesus Christ in words, business, pleasures and thoughts is dim, and not even desired. The light has come; what does it find? It finds men absorbed and heedless, thinking only of what they can keep for a little while at best; not caring for their fellow-men; selfish and as impervious to higher motives as a granite rock to sunshine. The true glory of a man is to reflect Christ. II. THE VOICE OF THE PROPHET REACHES THE CHURCH, both local and universal. The Church realizes its true mission only as it reflects the Divine light, which means, simply, realizes the life which was in Jesus Christ. 1. The Church should reflect Jesus in its worship. With Him worship was something essential and vital. Before every great act of His career He went apart from men to pray. The sources of His life were in God. Worship and prayer are the conduits along which flow streams of spiritual vitality. Is the Church a praying Church? Then it is continuing Christ's work. 2. The Church lives to repeat the teaching of Jesus. 3. In like manner the Church should reflect Jesus in the service of humanity. It lives to continue His ministry. The most hospitable place in every community ought to be the Church of Christ. Has any one a grief? Let him go to the Church. Are any lonely? Let them go to the Church. Have any disgraced themselves and their friends? Let them seek the Church and its help. But will all these various classes find there a welcome? Not only within its walls, but outside also the Church should serve humanity in the spirit of Christ. III. THIS CRY OF THE PROPHET COMES TO NATIONS. Nations, as well as individuals and Churches, exist to continue the Incarnation. That nation has not begun to realize its possibilities which has not learned that its superlative privilege is the manifestation of Jesus Christ. What do I mean? That the function of government is not only the protection of the people, but the service of humanity. John Milton truly said that the State is only a huge man. In the vision of the prophet when the light broke upon the sides of Mount Zion the nations saw the glory and were attracted by it (vers. 3, 14). The most beautiful thing in this world is the character of Jesus Christ; nothing else so wins men. (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*) "*Arise, shine!*"—I. TO WHOM THE CHARGE IS ADDRESSED. To the Church of Christ. This is evident from the context. Further, it appears from the nature of the charge that it can apply only to the Church. There is none else on earth capable of at once fulfilling the charge. The world cannot, for it is essentially dark—"darkness covers the earth." The Church is compared to reflected and artificial lights. Christ enlightens the world through His Church. II. THE CHARGE ITSELF. This is a twofold charge implying two distinct acts. 1. "Arise." This implies that the Church is in the meantime in a prostrate condition; her place is in the dust. This may be partly in penitence. It may indicate a state of affliction and mourning; the Church may be sitting in sackcloth. But chiefly it implies a state of sloth, worldliness, carnality. Whatever be the cause of this prostration the Church is directed to rise from the dust now. 2. "Shine." "Christ shall give thee light" for this very purpose; not merely to enlighten yourself, to impart life and joy to you, but that you may "shine," give light to the world. And this applies both to the Church as a whole and to the members of the Church individually. There are two ways in which those who have been enlightened by Christ may give light. On the one hand, by simply shining, each one in his sphere, as a separate light, perhaps in the midst of darkness. On the other hand, by kindling other lights. III. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH IT IS ENFORCED. "Thy light is come," etc. The Church has no independent light of her own, cannot shine of herself; and so, such an encouragement as this is needed. "Thy light"—this must mean Christ Himself, for He is the light of the Church. "Is come"—Christ did not come till seven or eight hundred years after this prophecy was delivered. But the prophet refers to Gospel times. Accordingly the Church did arise and shine at that time more brightly and auspiciously than she had ever done before. (*C. G. Scott.*) *An arousing call:*—There are some Christian men who have wasted a large part of their lives for want of somebody or something to wake them up. There is more evil wrought in the world by want of thought than by downright malice, and there is more good left undone through want of thought than through any aversion to the doing of good. Some Christians appear to have been born in the land of slumber, and they continually live in their native country of dreams. They rub their eyes occasionally, and suppose themselves to be wide awake; but they are in the Enchanted Ground, and, though

they know it not, they are little better than sleep-walkers the most of their days. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Shining Christians*:—I. To God's own people this is my first message, REMEMBER YOUR PRIVILEGE. Your light has come. 1. Recollect out of what darkness that light has delivered you. 2. This light, which God has given you, is His own glory. "And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Byron speaks of God's face being mirrored in the sea; but there is not space enough for the face of Deity to be fully reflected in the broad Atlantic, or in all the oceans put together. The image of God is to be fully seen in Jesus Christ, and nowhere else; for there you behold attributes which Creation cannot display. 3. There is also this blessed thing to be said about this light; you will never lose it (ver. 20). II. I WANT TO ROUSE YOU TO SERVICE. "Arise, shine; for," etc. Since your light has come, shine—1. By holy cheerfulness. 2. By a gracious godliness. 3. By zealous earnestness. 4. By a secret bravery. III. I WANT TO RALLY YOU TO THIS SHINING BY ONE OR TWO ARGUMENTS. 1. By the world's great need (ver. 2). 2. Because of the great results that will surely come of it (ver. 3). 3. Because of the great blessing it will bring to the Church (ver. 13, etc.). 4. "That I may be glorified" (ver. 21). (*Ibid.*) *The Epiphany: Christ manifested*:—I. THE STATE OF THE WORLD BEFORE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL AROSE. II. THE OBJECT OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION. III. THE FUTURE CONSUMMATION. (*G. Huntington, M.A.*) *The God-lit Church*:—The old story is repeated; Zion sits in the light while Egypt cowers in gloom. The light which shines upon her is the glory of the Lord, the ancient brightness that dwelt between the cherubim within the veil in the secret place of the Most High, and is now come out in the open world to envelop the desolate captive. Thus touched by the light she becomes light, and in her turn is bidden to shine. There is a very remarkable correspondence reiterated in my text between the illuminating God and the illuminated Zion. The word for "shine" is connected with the word for "light," and might fairly be rendered "lighten" or "be light." Twice the phrase "thy light" is employed; once to mean the light which is thine because it shines on thee; once to mean the light which is thine because it shines from thee. The other word, three times repeated, for "rising" is the technical word which expresses the sunrise, and it is applied both to the flashing glory that falls upon Zion, and to the light that gleams from her. Touched by the sun she becomes a sun, and blazes in her heaven in a splendour that draws men's hearts. I. AS TO THE FACT. Beneath the poetry of my text there lie very definite conceptions of a very solemn and grave character, and these conceptions are the foundation of the ringing summons that follows and which reposes upon a double basis—viz. "for thy light is come," and "for darkness covers the earth." There is a double element in the representation. We have a darkened earth and a sunlit and a sun-like Church, and unless we hold these two convictions in firm grasp, and that not merely as convictions that influence our understanding, but as ever-present forces acting on our emotions, our consciences, our wills, we shall not do the work God has set us to do in the world. If we take the sulphurous and smoky pall that wraps the earth and analyze its contents, they are these: the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of sorrow, the darkness of sin. On the other side, remember the contrasted picture here of the sunlit and sunny Church. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of my text. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." If you and I are Christians, we are bound to believe in Him as the exclusive source of certainty. We hear from Him no "Peradventure," but His word is "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," and on that we rest all our knowledge of God, of duty, of man, and of the future. If we have the light we shall be light. That is but putting in a picturesque form the very central truth of Christianity. The last word of the Gospel is transformation. We become like Him if we live near to Him, and the end for which the Master became like unto us in His incarnation and passion, was that we might become like to Him by the reception of His very own life unto our souls. These two convictions of these two facts, the dark earth, the sunlit, sun-like Church, lie at the basis of all our missionary work. II. WE HAVE BASED UPON THESE TWO FACTS THE SUMMONS TO THE CHURCH. "Shine, for thy light is come." If we have light, we are light. If we are light, we shall shine; but the shining is not altogether spontaneous and effortless. Stars do not need to be bidden to shine, nor candles either; but we need the exhortation because there are many things that thwart the brilliance and the clearance of our minds. The command suggests effort, and the effort may be in the direction of the specific vocal proclamation of His name. If we are light, we shall be able to shine; if we are light, we are bound to shine; if we are light,

we shall want to shine. III. THE CONFIDENT PROMISE. "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." If we have the light we shall be light; if we are light we shall shine, and if we shine we shall attract. A painter will fling upon his canvas a scene that you and I, with our purblind eyes, have looked at hundreds of times and seen no beauty in it, but when we gaze on the picture then we see how fair it is. There is an attractive power in the light of Christ shining from the face of a man. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *An imperial ministry:*—This is a great statesman's vision unveiling the moral and spiritual possibilities of a people. The prophet is primarily addressing his speech to an awakening nation. To direct a nation's views is to shape its policies, and to determine the trend and colour of its life. What, then, shall be the elements of an efficient and fruitful ideal? "The Lord shall arise upon thee," etc. (vers. 2, 3). What are the constituent elements in the vision? "Light" and "glory." A certain light, the element of illumination, charity, and simplicity of thought; a certain heat, the element of fervour, warm and expansive sympathies; a certain gravity, the element of impressiveness, weight and strength of moral principle. But the glory of the ideal is still further enriched and intensified. We cannot take Isaiah's ideal and employ it with Isaiah's limitation; we must carry over his vocabulary into the fuller day and let it receive enlargement in the life and mind of Christ. "Light," interpreted by the character of the Master, means the absence of shady compromise, sunlit definiteness of purpose, the clear discernment of essentials. "Heat," interpreted by the character of the Master, means an ardent inclusiveness of sympathy, cosmopolitan in its pervasion. "Gravity," glory, interpreted by the character of the Master, is significant of moral weight, incorruptible spiritual ambition, unconquerable virtue, whether illustrated in the light of a marriage-feast, or in the sombre experience of Pilate's judgment-bar. "Arise!" Stand erect and set thy face towards the burning vision, and thou shalt "shine" with reflected glory. By contemplating the Divine thou shalt incarnate the heart of thy contemplation. "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee," and thy imperial treasure shall be found in thy shining notabilities, in the radiant motives and ambitions of thy common life. We have seen this transfiguring ministry at work in the life of the individual. But we may be more than a little doubtful as to whether the vision will also serve and ennoble the community. Well, where is the line of transition? Surely, even in the nation we have again and again witnessed the transforming influence of the grand ideal. It was even so with the later experiences of the eighteenth century. The breaking up of formality, the melting of callousness, the opening out of rivers of philanthropy, the enlarged and sweetened life of our people, the enlightened measure of emancipation, can be directly traced to a "strange warming of the nation's heart," resulting from a restored contemplation of the light and glory of God. The prophet's vision reveals an imperial ideal, and unveils the only permanent imperial treasure. 1. The imperial character is to be creative of imperial unity (ver. 4). There is to be an enrichment of the home, a consolidation of the family, a knitting together of the finer fellowships of the nation. And mark how this statesman describes the large characteristics of the communion. "Then shalt thou see and flow together." It is to be an open-eyed communion, an illumined society, a fellowship of transparent aims and aspirations. "Thine heart shall fear;" the fellowship is not to be flippant, light-hearted, and vain; it is to be possessed by the pervasive influence of reverence, that saving element which preserves the sense of true perspective, and gives everything the setting of a just proportion. "And be enlarged;" the fellowship is not to be fixed and exclusive; its sympathies are to be elastic and expansive, reaching out in ever-enlarging circles of interest and regard. 2. The imperial unity is to be the minister of a world-wide illumination. "And nations shall come to thy light," etc. (ver. 3). If this be the true portrayal of imperial welfare, may we not infer the consequent obligations which rest upon the leaders of the people? The first essential of efficient public ministry is a large and exalted aim. The true aim of every true leader is to build up the moral energy of the people. To give ourselves to the production of superior men—this is the aim which should possess the minds and hearts of all who exercise leadership among their fellow-men. An aim like this, definitely and personally expressed, and pursued with undeviating consistency, will preserve a man from those perils of benumbment which seem to attach themselves to every public ministry. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The privilege and prerogative of the Christian Church:*—The Church is promised an extraordinary measure of light and glory; an immense increase in the number of her adherents, universal exaltation in the eyes of

her enemies, and permanent safety and happiness. I. THE DIVINE ILLUMINATION WHICH THE CHURCH RECEIVED. "Thy light is come," etc. The text suggests—1. The nature of this illumination. It embraces—(1) The light of Divine revelation. (2) The light of the Gospel dispensation. (3) The light of the Holy Spirit's teaching. 2. The necessity of this illumination. The Church existed in a dark age; intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness prevailed everywhere. This was pre-eminently the case when Christ came. This was—(1) The darkness of moral guilt. (2) The darkness of religious error. (3) The darkness of spiritual ignorance. This darkness was deep, profound, awful. 3. The beauty of this illumination. "The glory of the Lord," etc. Allusion is probably made to the Shechinah. God manifested Himself to His people, and shone upon them in the glory of His grace and mercy. 4. The source of this illumination. "Thy light is come," etc. It emanated from a Divine source. It was derived, not inherent. The Church is not the fountain of light, but the medium of it. It is called "thy light" because it was the exclusive or peculiar prerogative of the Church. It does not come from the Church, but is given to it, for its benefit and use. II. THE PERMANENT OBLIGATION WHICH THE CHURCH INCURS IN RELATION TO IT. The Church is a Divine institution, raised up for a specific purpose. Its work is to teach men the truth of God and to testify of the grace of God. But she sometimes fails fully to realize her obligations, privileges, prerogatives, and responsibilities. Here she is enjoined—1. To arise. She must arise from spiritual apathy, lethargy, and obscurity, take her legitimate position before the world, and faithfully discharge her obligations. Here is a loud call—(1) To behold the light, and hail it with joy. (2) To receive the light. (3) To utilize the light. 2. To shine. Privilege confers responsibility. Every fresh accession of spiritual illumination or power increases her influence and responsibility. The Church is a luminous body, and must shine with heavenly lustre. (1) For its own sake and benefit. It must gladly participate in the light that shines upon it from above, and be encompassed with light and glory. It should at all times be radiant with the beauty of holiness. (2) For the sake and benefit of others. Not only is it to participate in the light, but to become the grand medium and means of imparting it. Like the reflector to the lamp, it is to collect, receive, and reflect its rays for the benefit of those needing its light. How is the Church to shine? By the beauty of her teaching. By the perfection of her example. By the purity of her doctrine. By the exemplification of her principles. By the grandeur of her life. By the vitality of her organizations. By the vigour of her activity. Like the light in the lighthouse, the light of the Church, in every age, is to shine conspicuously, constantly, cheerfully, and without fail. III. THE GRAND PREDICTION WHICH THE CHURCH IS ULTIMATELY TO REALIZE. "And the Gentiles," etc. This was partially accomplished soon after the rise of the Church, when thousands of the Gentiles "walked in this light." When a few years elapsed, the Roman Emperor and many other kings ostensibly opened their eyes to the beams of light shed on the world by the Church. Large accessions are being made, and her power and influence are growing and will extend till the Gospel shall universally triumph over error, ignorance, and ungodliness. (*J. S. Spilsbury.*) *The Church: her functions and her blessedness:*—I. THE CHURCH HAS THE LARGEST SCOPE. Nations "come to her light, kings to the brightness of her rising." She is world-wide and universal. II. THE CHURCH BEARS THE CLEAREST WITNESS. She "arises." She "shines." When she pulses and palpitates with the life of God, how impressive is her trumpet-call! It penetrates far. It arouses multitudes. III. THE CHURCH DOES THE MOST GLORIOUS WORK. "Who are these that fly to her as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Her Lord in her saves and edifies His sons and daughters, convinces and converts and comforts. IV. THE CHURCH ENJOYS THE MOST LASTING BLESSEDNESS. In His favour her King "has mercy on her." He never fails nor forsakes her. He leads her members just now in green pastures and by the waters of quietness. He will bring them by-and-by to the "Lovely city in a lovely land." (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) *The true light of man:*—I. THE TRUE LIGHT OF MAN IS THE MEDIATORIAL REVELATION OF GOD (ver. 1). II. THIS TRUE LIGHT OF MAN WILL ONE DAY BE UNIVERSALLY DIFFUSED (ver. 3). III. THE UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF THIS LIGHT WILL EFFECT A WONDERFUL REVOLUTION IN THE WORLD (vers. 5–11). IV. THE PEOPLE WHO, UNDER THIS LIGHT, WILL NOT SERVE THE TRUE GOD, MUST INEVITABLY BE RUINED (ver. 12). (*Homilist.*) *Christ our Light:*—Light makes many a surface on which it falls flash, but it is the rays which are not absorbed that are reflected in the optics of earth; but in this loftier region the deviation is not superficial but inward, and it is the

light which is swallowed up within us that then comes forth from us. Christ will dwell in our hearts, and we shall be like some poor little diamond-shaped bit of glass in a cottage window which, when the sun smites it, is visible over miles of the plain. And if that sun falls upon us, its image will be mirrored in our hearts, and flashing in our lives. The clouds that lie over the sunset, though in themselves they be but poor, grey and moist vapour, when smitten by its beneficent radiance become not unworthy ministers and attendants upon its glory. So it may be with us, for Christ comes to be our light. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The shining of the common-place:*—One summer day, when walking in Surrey, on the slope of a hill—the sun setting behind me—right away across the valley I espied a most remarkable light. It was more brilliant than electric light, and seemed to rise from the ground. At first I supposed that some one had lit a fire with resinous wood that sparkled and flashed, but there was evidently no smoke. It seemed as though some angel had dropped a brilliant star down there upon the ploughed field, and that it was burning itself out. Finally, on my reaching the spot, I discovered that an old piece of broken glass had caught the light of the setting sun, and was bathed in a supernatural glow. An old piece of bottle-glass—yet so brilliant—the bottle-glass not being visible, because of the light that shone on it! (*Life of Faith.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth.**—*The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles:*—1. The first token that was shown to the Gentile world that the great Light had arisen which was to cast its beams over them as well as over the small nation which alone hitherto had known God, was the wonderful star which was seen in the sky. This appeared but twice to the Magi—once to tell them to set out, and once to tell them that they had arrived. All the rest was faith. 2. It was the manifestation of the Redeemer, the Light of the world, to the Gentiles. But much had yet to be done before the Gentiles were received into the full equality of privilege and grace with the Jews. It was above thirty years yet before the rending of the veil of the temple showed that the partition-wall was broken down by the death of Christ, which divided Jew from Gentile; still longer before the commission was given to go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Holy Trinity; still longer before the vision at Joppa and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Cæsarea bade St. Peter baptize Cornelius, the first Gentile Christian, into the Church. 3. Let us claim our share in that exceeding great joy with which the wise men saw the first brightness of that star when they saw it in the East. If we do truth—that is to say, if we really try to please God, by living according to His will—then we "come to the light," and our deeds will be made manifest that they are wrought in God. (*G. Moberly.*) *Zion's glory:*—The prophet here reverts for a moment to the previous condition of the world, in order to describe, with more effect, the glorious change to be produced. He is not, therefore, to be understood as saying that Zion shall be glorious because, while the nations are in darkness, she is to enjoy exclusive light, but because the light imparted to her first shall draw the nations to her. (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Ver. 3. **And the Gentiles shall come to thy light.**—*The attractiveness of an enlightened and light-giving Church:*—What shall invite such multitudes to the Church? They shall be allowed to join themselves to thee—1. By the light that shines upon thee. 2. By the light with which thou shinest. (*M. Henry.*) *The Jews unconsciously giving light to the Gentiles:*—I have read in one of George Macdonald's novels of a born blind lamplighter. He illumined the city at night; but he had no sense of what he was doing. So has it been with this land. She has presented the Portrait to the gallery; she has heard the plaudits of the spectators, and she has refused to join in them. In all history there is nothing so unique. It is the enemies of this land that have crowned her world-king; it is the Gentiles that have come to His light. The lamplighter has been blind to the beauty of that throne which she has illuminated. Palestine has lit up the scene; she has listened to the crowd shouting their applause, and she has wondered why. She has been like a deaf mute in a concert-room. She has struck by accident the notes of a harp, and by accident they have burst into music. The audience has cheered the performance to the echo; but the performer knows not her triumph. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *Blessings of light:*—Miss Florence Nightingale, as the result of her wide observation, remarks:—"One of the greatest observers of human things says, 'Where there is sun there is thought.'" All physiology goes to confirm this. Where is the shady side of deep valleys, there is cretinism.

Where are cellars and the unsunned side of narrow streets, there is the degeneracy of the human race; mind and body equally degenerating. Put the pale, withering plant and human being into the sun, and, if not too far gone, each will recover heart and spirit. In France there are hospitals where they trust almost entirely to light for the cure of disease. Surely there is here an earthly analogue to a spiritual fact. (*W. G. Horder.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Lift up thine eyes round about.**—*The Gentiles gathered:*—I. THE GATHERING OF THE GENTILES TO ZION. From every quarter—from far—from beyond the sea. With all the forces. II. ZION'S EMOTIONS. She sees and overflows with joy. (*R. A. Bertram.*) "*Nursed at thy side*":—Rather, "on thy side," *i. e.* carried on the hip, the Eastern mode of carrying young children (chap. lxvi. 12). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Church-membership:*—The Church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers. They that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the discipline of it. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 5–8. **Then thou shalt see.**—*The glory of the millennial Church:*—Wealth, Commerce, and Agriculture are three great interests and powers on earth—a trinity of forces which have in all ages engrossed mankind. Each one of the three will have its representatives in that vast multitude who are to ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The enlargement of the Church:*—We are likewise told how the Church shall be affected with this increase of her numbers and enlargement of her borders. 1. She will be in a transport of joy upon this account (ver. 5). 2. There will be a mixture of fear with this joy. "Thine heart shall fear," as though it were a thing unlawful to join with the Gentiles, etc. 3. She shall be enlarged with Love, so as to leave room for all the Gentile converts. 4. She shall be struck with surprise and wonder, saying, "Who are these that fly?" etc. (*E. Erskine.*)

Vers. 6–9. **The multitude of camels shall cover thee.**—*Commercial nations and nomad tribes aiding the Church:*—The nations engaged in commerce bring their wares to the Church; the tribe of Midian, descended from Abraham and Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2), and of which the Ephaens formed a branch, dwelling on the east coast of the Elanitic Gulf in the town of Madyan, lying five days' journey south from Aila (according to the Arabic geographers)—these come in caravans so numerous and so long that the country round Jerusalem swarms with camels. All these, Midianites and Ephaens, come from Sheba, of which Virgil says, *solis est turea virga Sabaeis*, and which, according to Strabo, was a populous country of ample resources, producing myrrh, incense and cinnamon. There (viz. in Yemen), where spices, precious stones and gold are found, they have brought gold and incense; and these valuable gifts they now bring to Jerusalem, not as unwilling tribute, but with cheerful proclamation of the glorious doings and attributes of Jehovah, the God of Israel. As the trading nations come, so also do the nomad tribes: Kedar, *i. e.* the Kedarenes, armed with bows (chap. xxi. 17), and dwelling in fortified settlements (chap. xlii. 11) in the desert between Babylon and Syria; and Nebaioth (likewise of Ishmaelitish origin, according to Gen. xxv. 23), a nomad tribe which, though still of no importance during the Israelitish monarchy, rose in the first century B.C. to eminence as a civilized nation, whose territory extended from the Elanitic Gulf to the country lying east of the Jordan, across Belka and as far as Hauran—for the monumental inscriptions they have left behind reach from Egypt to Babylon, though Arabia Petræa is the chief place where they are found. The Kedarenes drive their flocks of small cattle, when collected, to Jerusalem, and the rams of the Naboteans, brought by this nation, are placed at the service of the Church, and ascend, for good pleasure, the altar of Jehovah. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Dromedaries:*—Properly "young camels." The word does not occur in the Old Testament elsewhere; amongst the Arabs it denotes, according to some of the native lexicographers, a camel less than nine years old. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. **All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee.**—*Sacrificial service:*—None of the prophets of the Old Testament is able to think of the worship of God by the Israel of the latter days without the offering of sacrifices; but it would be a return to the limited conceptions of the Old Testament if one were to conclude that animal sacrifice will ever be restored. The dividing-wall of national

particularism and ceremonial observances forming shadows of things to come will never be re-established; and with the cessation of sacrificial worship since the fiery judgment fell upon the second temple, there has for ever passed away the restriction of worship to any one central spot on earth (John iv. 21), but the stream of salvation which proceeded from Jerusalem will, nevertheless, ultimately empty its waters there, and make the city once more a fountain of blessing. As the prophet has said (chap. lvi. 7), the house of God in Jerusalem will become "a house of prayer" for all nations: Jehovah here calls it "My house of glory," as that which was built for His honour and filled with His gracious presence. He will make its internal glory like the external, by adorning it with the gifts brought in homage by the world of converted Gentiles. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) **I will glorify the house of My glory.**—*A prosperous Church:*—I. WHAT IS NOW THE HOUSE OF GOD? A house is a place of residence; the house of God, in the proper sense of the phrase, is the place of His residence. In this sense, the universe is His house, for He inhabits all space, and neither is, nor can be, confined to any one spot. Solomon felt this when he built the magnificent temple at Jerusalem. "Behold," said he, addressing himself to God, "the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" Stephen felt it when, in allusion to the same house, he said, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?" Whilst, however, the universe is thus the only proper house of God, there are places which, in condescension to our weakness, are specially denominated His house, to denote that He specially manifests His presence there, is specially worshipped there, and bestows there special spiritual blessings, rich spiritual banquets. The dispensation of the law was intended to foreshadow good things to come, and accordingly under that dispensation there was a typical sanctuary, a house intended to typify the spiritual house of this dispensation—the Church. In that typical sanctuary there was a visible emblem of the Divine presence, a cloud overshadowing the mercy-seat, the same cloud which had gone before the children of Israel when journeying through the wilderness, as a pillar of a cloud by day, and as a pillar of fire by night. This visible emblem was a type of the spiritual presence of God in His Church. In the same typical sanctuary where this visible emblem was vouchsafed, typical sacrifices were offered and typical blessings bestowed. The new dispensation being the antitype is spiritual. Hence we have not now a typical temple, but every believer individually, and especially every Christian Church, is a spiritual temple. The house of God, then, under this dispensation, is not the building where the saints meet, but the assembly of the saints be it where it may; it is a spiritual house built of living stones, a house where spiritual sacrifices are offered, the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. At the same time, whilst the building is not the house of God, there is a subordinate sense in which it may be so denominated. II. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MAY THE HOUSE CALLED "THE HOUSE OF GOD" BE DESCRIBED AS "THE HOUSE OF HIS GLORY"? It is the house of His glory, when His glory is the grand object in view. This house of His glory must not only be built, but also used for His glory. We have applied the phrase "house of God" in its subordinate sense to the building; let us proceed to apply it in a higher sense to the assembly of the saints, to the Church meeting in the building; and we ask, When is such a Church properly denominated the house of God's glory? 1. It is so, when the object of its original formation, and that of its assembling from time to time, is the glory of God. Let professing Christians meet together as a mere matter of form, meet without any definite end in view, or meet with any other end than the glory of their Lord, the Church is no longer the house of His glory; nay, if even they meet for praise, for their own spiritual improvement and for the conversion of sinners, yet if the glory of God be not the ultimate end of all this, their assembly cannot be looked upon as the house of His glory. 2. The Church is the House of God's glory, when His glory is kept in view in all Church acts; for example, in receiving members, exercising discipline, choosing officers. 3. The Church is the house of God's glory, when a spirit in accordance with His glory is cherished and manifested by every individual member. It is for the glory of God that love should prevail in His house. It is for the glory of God that there should be peace in His Church. And that the members of Churches should be characterized by humility. III. THE PROMISE THAT GOD WILL GLORIFY THE HOUSE OF HIS GLORY. There is no promise that He will glorify the house which may be called by His name, if it be not the house

of His glory. The glory is—1. When He makes the house the place of numerous conversions. 2. When He makes it the place of edification to His people. (*R. Alliot, LL.D.*) *I will glorify the house of My glory*:—I. THE PLACE. For what reasons, or with what propriety, may the Christian Church be called the house of the glory of God? Chiefly on these accounts—1. Because it is planned and built by the purpose and power of the Most High. 2. Because it contains the special manifestations of the Divine presence and glory. (1) Christ Himself is the exact image of God. He is the true Shechinah, the glory of the Lord. (2) In the gifts and influences of the Holy Ghost. (3) By the development of the Divine glory in the preaching of the Word. II. THE PROMISE. "I will glorify," etc. God did so in the first temple, by making it an object of beauty and glory to all His people, and by causing it to excite the admiration of surrounding nations also; and still further, by sending Christ finally to minister in that temple. God will glorify the house of His glory—1. By accepting the services and offerings which, in connection with it, are performed. 2. By making it the place of special communion and fellowship with Himself. 3. By protecting it permanently against all the efforts of hostile powers. 4. By extending its influence, and increasing its celebrity in the earth. 5. By consummating it, finally, in the splendour and happiness of heaven. (*J. Parsons.*) *God glorifying the house of His glory*:—The vision is inspiring, and can only be fulfilled in the moral grandeur of the Church. I. It begins to be accomplished WHEN SHE IS MADE A LIGHT TO DISPEL SPIRITUAL DARKNESS. At times she has not laid sufficient emphasis on her mission as a teaching Church. Unquestionably philanthropy is a function of the Church. But she ought not to permit the teaching side of her work to be thrust into the background. Her special business is to fight darkness with light. II. God also glorifies her WHEN HE MAKES HER THE ARENA OF HEAVENLY VICTORIES. III. God glorifies the Church IN MAKING HER THE SCHOOL OF SAINTLY VIRTUES. All educational institutions are to be admired, but the Church is foremost among them. To know the world, to know self, to know God, cover the entire domain of knowledge and mark its distinctive steps and progress. In the Church we are trained in the knowledge of self and God. IV. But beyond all this the Almighty glorifies her WHEN HE MAKES IT A GARDEN FOR THE GROWTH OF HUMAN FELLOWSHIPS. We must not forget that what society knows of brotherhood has come from the Church. In the Roman Empire there were provident societies, especially burial guilds, before Christianity, but the real idea of fellowship began with the household of faith. The people were taught by Christ to love one another. And when the Church realizes her calling in this respect, and rich and poor meet together in her communion on equal footing, then is she resplendent with heavenly glory. (*G. C. Lorimer, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Who are these that fly as a cloud?**—*Accessions to the Church*:—It is a fine conception of Vitringa, that the ships expressly mentioned in the next verse are here described in their first appearance at a distance resembling with their outspread sails and rapid course a fleecy cloud driven by the wind, and a flight of doves returning to their young. Both comparisons are used as here to indicate rapidity of motion (Job xxx. 15; Ps. lv. 6, 7; Hos. xi. 11; Jer. iv. 13). (*J. A. Alexander.*) *As doves to their windows*:—I. THE MOVEMENT WHICH IS HERE STATED. It is a flight. The expression is intended to signify the coming of men from the distant regions of the earth to the Church of God, of which such glorious things are here said. 1. The movement signifies that state into which these men are transformed, and in which they come to the enjoyment of the designs of mercy. It is the abandonment of all their idolatrous worship; it is the renunciation of all that is opposed to God and to salvation; it is their coming back to "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls"; it is their looking to God as the alone source of happiness and peace; it is their believing in Him, who alone is able to save and to bless them. 2. It is under the Gospel dispensation that this is to be exemplified. 3. Divine influence must be imparted to effect this. 4. This change arises from the statements of Gospel truth as they are contained in the written Word. II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MOVEMENT IS SAID TO BE MADE? The figures denote—1. Eagerness. 2. Their number. 3. Their unity. The clouds are supposed to fly in one body, and to be driven to one part of the horizon: the doves fly together to attain one home. So it will be with all who have been conducted by the Spirit into the way of life everlasting. III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE INQUIRY WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF THIS MOVEMENT EXCITES. 1. Surprise. 2. Joy. (*J. Parsons.*) *Converts coming into the Church*:—They come as doves to the windows.

I. BECAUSE THEY FLY LOW. The eagle darts up, as if to strike its beak into the sun. There are birds that seem to dwell under the eaves of heaven; you see them as little specks against the sky, so far off that you cannot guess the style of their plumage or the shape of their bodies. They float so far away that if the hunter's gun be discharged at them they do not change their course. Not so with the doves or pigeons; they never take any high excursions. They fly around your roof and alight on the fence, and seem to dislike great altitudes. So these souls who come to Christ and to His Church fly low. They ask no great things; they seek a humble place at the feet of Christ. II. BECAUSE THEY FLY FOR SHELTER. The albatross makes a throne of the tempest; the sea-gulls find their grandest frolic in the storm. Not so with doves; at the first blow of the north-easter they fly to the coop. Eagle contends with eagle in mid-air, and vulture fights vulture on the bosom of the carcass; but doves at the first dash of the bird of prey speed for shelter from fiery eye and iron beak and loathsome talon. So these souls come for shelter. Christ is the only shelter of the soul in trouble. III. BECAUSE THEY FLY HOME. Most of the winged denizens have no home; now they are at the north and now at the south, as the climate indicates. This year a nest in one tree, next year a nest in another tree. But the pigeons alluded to, summer and winter and always, have a home in the dovecot. And so Christ is the home of those who come to Him. He is a warm home! they rest under the "feathers of the Almighty." IV. BECAUSE THEY COME IN FLOCKS. The buzzard, with dripping beak, fluttering up from the carrion, is alone. You occasionally look up against the wintry sky and see a solitary bird winging past. But doves or pigeons are in flocks; by scores and hundreds do they fly. So to-day we see a great flock coming into the kingdom. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

A flight of doves:—I. The first thought which the verse suggests, in connection with our Communion services, is that of BLISSFUL ASSOCIATION. As the dovecot may have its different apertures, so each Church retains its own denominational entrance. But the glorious meeting-place, the spiritual Shelter, is the same. II. In connection with our sacred rite, the emblem suggests a PUBLIC PROFESSION. The prophet is arrested; or, possibly, in the poetical imagery here employed, a chorus of spectators —in which he veils his own personality—are arrested by the spectacle. The doves are not spoken of as flying under screen of night or darkness; neither were they beheld winging a solitary or circuitous flight, as if dreading and evading observation. But the midday sun looked down on a whole cloud of them, their golden iridescent plumage flashing in his beams. It is no unimportant or insignificant feature in your Divinely-appointed ordinance, this open, dove-like flight to the Covenant Ark. III. The cloud of doves, as here represented, betokens THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS AND OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICANTS. They are, or ought to be, dove-like. The dove has these among other characteristics—1. It is the complex symbol, in sacred poetry and art, of peace and love, of meekness and gentleness, purity and harmlessness (Cant. i. 15, vi. 9; Matt. x. 16). In the rude, early Christian symbolism of the Roman catacombs, the dove, as the bird of hope, is generally represented in connection, variously treated, with the olive branch. What a lesson for us all as believers in Jesus. 2. A second characteristic of the dove is, that it is swift of wing. The prophet saw them, not sailing like a cloud, or drifting like a cloud, but flying; borne along with whirlwind speed. The carrier dove is well known for the swiftness —the length and steadiness—of its arrowy course, surpassing the proverbial flight of the eagle. This, coupled with Isaiah's figure, surely suggests the activities of the Christian life. IV. The figure of the dove fleeing to its window reminds and suggests that it is a bird which requires A SAFE SHELTER. It does not, like some others, cower in hedgerows or furrows. The wild pigeon may build its nest on the forest tree; but the tame one seeks its secure dovecot. The Eastern dove, which had no artificial home, had its equally secure dwelling in the rock-clefts (Sol. Song ii. 14). A little way from the north-west shores of the Lake of Gennesaret there is a recess in the hills called the "Wâdy Hyman," or "Valley of Doves," the sides of which are perforated with their retreats. You who are communicants have been fleeing anew to-day for refuge to the "Rock of Ages." It is a special characteristic of the dove, that, however far it goes—though at a distance of hundreds of miles—it will fly back with unerring aim, sureness, and safety to its abode. So with "the dove of Christ." V. The cloud of doves on wing to their windows reminds one of YOUNG COMMUNICANTS. In the LXX the words of this verse are remarkable! "Who are these that fly like doves with their young?" The doves fly to their dovecot, but not alone; they have their offspring with them. Not the least beautiful thing about a Communion Sunday is the spectacle of young doves; those who have just risen from

their early perches, the perches of the morning of life, and are winging their way, bright and unsoiled, to the Rock! VI. One other thought is suggested, by the remembrance of a large class of those who are always to be found at the Sacrament of Communion—I mean THE AFFLICTED. This image of doves flying to their windows reminds of storm. They were seen flying; drifting along like a tempestuous cloud. The dove flies to its dovecot, or to the rock-clefts, when the storm is brewing. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The joy of the Church on the multiplication of converts to Christ*:—I. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF CONVERTS IN EVANGELICAL TIMES. 1. Whence do they fly? These persons are represented as coming from among the Gentiles, the Pagan world. 2. Whither do they fly? They repair to Him, who is designated in the sixteenth verse as "the Lord, the Saviour and Redeemer, the Holy One of Jacob." But this is not the whole. These converts are also represented as repairing to the Church as to their rest and home. 3. What is the mode in which they are represented as flying from their former position, to Christ and to the Church? The images are very beautiful and impressive. (1) "As the cloud," which overspreads the heavens; intimating the vast numbers who should turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. "As the cloud," with great speed and celerity. "As the cloud," openly and conspicuously; not as though they were desirous of concealment, but in the spirit of those who are ready to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Christ, or of him who exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "As the cloud," powerfully; so that nothing shall resist their course. "As the cloud," which drops many a shower as it passes along the sky, and which refreshes and fertilizes the earth, so shall these converts be useful in their advancement, like those of whom we read in the history of the Gospels, who as they travelled through the towns and villages and different parts of the country, spread the name of Jesus, and pressed others to become His disciples also. (2) Look also at the other admirable similitude: "As the doves." This not only expresses some similar ideas, such as that of numbers and of rapidity and of strength—but some others which we must not omit carefully to notice. It denotes, then, general unanimity. They are all bent on one grand object—"What must I do to be saved?" They have all one Saviour to whom they look—one method of salvation which they embrace. The multitude is, in this respect, of one heart and one soul. It describes their cordial fellowship. In the happy days when the Gospel shall thus win its way among men, not one or two of a family and of a tribe alone, scattered here and there, shall hold communion with each other, but the body of believers shall be joined together in the unity of the spirit and in the bond of peace. And in fine, as the doves repair to their windows, and enter their cote, as their rest and home, when wearied with their long flight; so the subjects of Divine grace take refuge in the Church from the storms without, and there find a repose which is not to be obtained in the world. II. THE SENTIMENTS AND EMOTIONS WITH WHICH WE SHOULD VIEW THESE ACCESSIONS TO THE CHURCH. "Who are these, that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" 1. This is the language of surprise and admiration; for the conversion of a soul to God is in all cases a wonder. 2. It is the language of gratitude and pleasure. 3. It is the language of complacency. 4. This is the language of prospective hope. For, if it be admitted that already many have come and yielded themselves up to Christ, it is a pleasing thought that they are only as the early drops of the copious shower. (*J. Clayton, jr., M.A.*) *God's doves flying to His windows*:—I. A SWEET SIGHT THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH GETS OF THE STATE OF MATTERS UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT, upon the revelation of Christ in the Gospel among the Gentiles. She sees poor souls upon the wing, in great multitudes, flying to a Saviour; and a sweeter sight cannot be seen upon earth. II. THE MANNER OF THEIR FLIGHT. "As a cloud, and as doves." III. THE TERM OR OBJECT OF THEIR FLIGHT. They fly to the windows for their relief. Like the windows of the ark of Noah, whereat the dove entered, when she could find no place for the sole of her foot, because of the deluge. IV. THE PLEASANT SURPRISE THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH IS PUT INTO AT THIS SIGHT. (*E. Erskine.*) *Marvellous increase of the Church*:—The Church, when she uttered these words, appears to have been the subject of three kinds of feeling. I. WONDER. 1. The Church wondered at the number of her converts. 2. The Chaldee has the idea in it of swiftness. "Who are these that fly as swiftly as a cloud?" 3. The Targum has another idea, that of publicity. The cloud flies so that everybody can see it. So do these converts fly openly before the world. 4. There is another idea here, which Dr. Gill gives us in his very valuable commentary. "Who are these that fly as a cloud," for

unanimity? Not as clouds, but "as a cloud"; not as two or three bodies, but as one united and compact mass! 5. Again, there is the idea of power. Who is he that shall bridle a cloud and stop it in its march? II. PLEASURE. 1. The Church is exceedingly pleased at the character of those who come to her. "Doves." 2. The Church feels pleasure in their condition: They "fly." 3. The translation of the LXX gives us another idea. "Who are these that fly like doves with their young?" The Church rejoices at the company that the converts bring with them. 4. The Church feels pleasure at the direction in which these doves move. "To their windows." The joy of the Church is that the poor sinner does not fly to man, nor to the law, but to Christ, the dovecot. III. ANXIETY. "Ah!" says the Church, "it is all very well their flying like a cloud; it is all right their going as doves to their windows; but who are they?" She anxiously desires to be sure that it is all gold that is put into her treasury. "Who are they?" I address myself to an anxious Church to answer it. 1. They are those that fly. They fly because they cannot stop where they were, and they are flying somewhere else for refuge. 2. They fly, not on the ground, but like a cloud, up high. They were persons that did not care about the world, but wanted heaven. 3. They were persons driven by the wind, just as the clouds are—who have no power of themselves to move, but have something driving them behind. 4. They are persons who have been regenerated, for they are "doves." They are changed from ravens into doves, from lions into lambs. 5. They are those who have fled to their windows, and found a refuge in Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The cloud of doves:*—I. WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO MANY? The answer to that inquiry is another question: Why should they not be many? 1. There are a great many sinners in the world; why should not a great number be converted? When many souls are brought to Christ, they are only relatively many. Usually, alas! they are relatively small. 2. Has not Christ brought into the world a great redemption? 3. Why should they not come in crowds when the spirit of God is quite able to lead them to come? 4. Heaven is very great, and the preparations which grace has made are very large. II. WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY? 1. They fly to Christ, because they are driven, and cannot help flying to Him. 2. They may well fly, because they are in danger. 3. Besides, these flying sinners have strong desires within them. I sometimes see a man throw a pigeon up into the air, that it may find its way home. It usually wheels about for a little while, as though it were uncertain which direction it should take; but, presently, its quick eye catches sight of some familiar landmark, and by instinct it knows which is its way home, and then, away it goes. So is it with a soul that the Spirit of God has once quickened. It longs for Christ. It may hesitate, and look about to find the way it is to go to find Him; but at last, it says within itself, "There He is," and away it goes, like the doves to their windows. 4. They may well fly, because they have such a short time in which to reach the Saviour. III. WHY DO THEY FLY AS DOVES, that is, in a covey, so that they look like a moving cloud? 1. Because they are all in one common danger. They are too much taken up with the solemnities of their condition before God to have time or wish for contention; and, therefore, they do not quarrel and fight, as a number of hawks might do, but they fly together in one band. 2. Because they are seeking one common refuge. IV. WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY THIS WAY? I mean, what makes them fly to Christ? What makes them fly to His Church? 1. Because they are seeking safety, and there is no safety for them except in Christ. 2. They also need rest, and a dovecot is a place of rest to a dove. 3. You like to come where God's people assemble because your food is there. 4. Our companions are there. 5. Some of us fly there because our young are there. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. **Surely the isles shall wait for Me.**—*The ships of Tarshish,* coming from the extreme end of the European island-region, as the leaders of the fleet bringing Zion's children from afar. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Missionary ships:*—The ships of Tarshish, transport-ships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the Church, or, which is equivalent, to carry the ministers of the Church to remote parts to preach the Gospel, and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. (*M. Henry.*) *The enlargement of the Church:*—I. WHO ARE BROUGHT. "Thy sons," *i. e.* such as are designed to be so, those "children of God that are scattered abroad" (John xi. 52). II. WHAT THEY SHALL BRING WITH THEM. They live at such a distance that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who live remote from Jerusalem, when they come up to worship at the feast, they shall bring "their silver and their gold with them." When we give up

ourselves to God we must, with ourselves, give up all we have to Him. If we honour Him with our spirits, we will honour Him with our substance. III. To WHOM THEY SHALL DEVOTE AND DEDICATE THEMSELVES AND ALL THEY ARE WORTH. To "the name of the Lord thy God;" to God as the Lord of all, and the Church's God and King, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom Israel worships as a holy One, in the beauty of holiness, "because He hath glorified thee." The honour God puts upon His Church and people should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them. "We will go with you, for God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. **Therefore thy gates shall be open continually.**—*Open gates:*—"Therefore thy gates," etc. 1. Because thou hast no reason to fear thine enemies. 2. Because thou hast reason to expect thy friends. (*M. Henry.*) *The ever-ready Christ:*—Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to Him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. **For the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish.**—*The character and doom of a corrupt nation:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF A CORRUPT NATION. The text implies—1. That there is a certain course of human life which the Bible recognizes as serving the Lord. 2. That nations as well as individuals are bound to pursue that course. There is no sentiment more common, none more philosophically absurd, none more morally pernicious than this: that communities of men are relieved from obligations which are binding upon individuals. II. THE DOOM OF A CORRUPT NATION. "They shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." 1. The doom is most calamitous. "It shall perish." (1) Perish as to their national existence. Their commerce shall waste away; their government shall be dissolved; all the institutions they glory in shall die out. The whole land shall be desolate as an old castle. Many great nations have thus died. Where are the empires of the Pharaohs, the Belshazzars, the Alexanders and the Cæsars? They have perished, they have utterly wasted. (2) But there is a more solemn sense still in which nations perish, that is, in a spiritual sense. They shall lose their souls. Not their existence, not their consciousness, not their memories; but their mercies, their friendships, their hopes, their heaven, their God. 2. The doom is most certain. It is here threatened with emphasis—"they shall perish, yea," etc. All analogy indicates its certainty. Our subject explains—(1) National convulsions. (2) The true method of promoting national stability. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 13. **The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee.**—*Trees employed in the service of the Church:*—It is difficult to say whether the reference be to building materials for the sacred edifice, or to ornamental trees planted in the temple-courts. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Variety in unity:*—Variety of instrumentality and operation subordinate to unity of purpose is a striking feature in all the works of God. This law provides for beauty as well as use. The text teaches us that the method by which God works in nature is also the method by which He works in grace—that the law of variety in unity is the law according to which He consolidates and extends His kingdom among mankind. The allusion and the doctrine are equally clear. The allusion is to the various trees of Lebanon employed by Solomon for utility and beauty in the erection of the temple in Jerusalem. Varying in size, and quality, and appearance of wood, they were all deemed necessary for the purpose of beautifying the place, that was to be made more beautiful and glorious still by the majesty and grace of the indwelling God. The doctrine is that, in like manner, various agencies—men of different periods and nations, men of different positions, talents, and attainments, men of opposite creeds and mental tastes—are used by God in the erection and adornment of that spiritual temple which He makes His special abode, the magnificence and glory of which, outliving the desolations of time, shall shine to His praise through the ages of eternity. (*W. Walters.*) *Diverse agencies in the Church:*—I. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS DOCTRINE ARE MANIFOLD. 1. The first I notice is that which is supplied us in the structure of the Bible. To a superficial observer the Bible seems a collection of small books bound together without any connecting-link. But if we come to study this collection of books carefully, we shall see, underlying all diversities, a unity which indicates that all have been originated and guided by one supreme mind. 2. Certain periods require certain orders of men and certain gifts, not necessary at other times. 3. Further, the peculiar qualities of various races and tribes serve to extend the truth of God, and promote the growth

and perfection of His Church. Christianity does not recognize nationalities as such. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, European and African, American and Asiatic, —all are one in Christ Jesus. Still, God sanctifies all national characteristics to His gracious purpose of making Christianity universally triumphant. Jewish reverence, Grecian intelligence and taste, Roman courage and honour, Scandinavian enterprise, the practical energy of the Anglo-Saxon, the speculative inquiry and patient toil of the German, the Frenchman's brilliant vivacity and grace, the Italian's glowing imagination, the ardent negro, and the Oriental full of subtlety and disputation— all are wrought by the Master-Builder into the strength and beauty of the structure He is rearing to His honour. 4. Nor can denominational distinctions be regarded as altogether an evil; for God makes them all subserve the complete manifestation of His many-sided Gospel, and the wider extension of His kingdom. 5. Original differences of mental constitution and temperament have also their place and function. There are diversities of gifts, yet there is the same Spirit; there are differences of administrations, yet there is the same Lord; there are diversities of operations, yet it is the same God which worketh all in all. II. PRACTICAL REMARKS. 1. We may be sure that where God has designed and qualified men for work in His Church He will prepare the way for their usefulness. 2. Every man should try to find his true position, and prove faithful in it. 3. The subject affords encouragement to the feeblest of the Lord's servants. All have their place and use. 4. Are we not reminded of the duty of charity towards all engaged in the work of the Lord? Too often the diversities of Christian men are occasions for jealousy and strife. If we are Christians, we are all plants of God's right hand planting; let us be content to bloom after our kind, and rejoice in that we all contribute something to the glory of the Master's garden. (*Ibid.*) **I will make the place of My feet glorious.**—"*The place of My feet*":—I. THE SCENE OF THIS SPECIAL DIVINE GLORY. "The place of My feet." The sacred writers speak of God's feet as indicating His personal presence. The place of God's feet, or His footstool, was, in ancient times, the temple at Jerusalem. The allusion of the language is to a royal throne. Jehovah is conceived of as the King of Israel, the King of kings, whose throne is in heaven, but His footstool in the earthly temple; and thither the Israelites as His true subjects were required to repair, to render homage to their great King, and bend lowly before His footstool. All this was, in turn, a figure of the better things reserved for us. The Jewish particularity has been broadened out into the compass of the great household of faith, whose sons and daughters are drawn from all the earth's kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. The true Church, composed of all believers of whatever name or nation, is God's temple—"the place of His feet!" In a real and important sense the wide earth, and the whole material creation, is His footstool, marked everywhere by the broad footprints of the Creator revealing His eternal power and Godhead. The signs of Providence reveal the movements of a present and ever-working God, exercising wise, and righteous, and benignant control over His creatures. II. THE GLORY OF THE SCENE. It was the glory of Eden that there God talked with man face to face. So it is the glory of heaven that there He replenishes His saints with the joys of His eternal fellowship. It was the glory of Sinai that there He displayed His grandeur and proclaimed His law; and of Tabor and Calvary that there He unfolded His hidden majesty, and the fulness of His mercy. And it is the glory of the Church that it is distinguished by the clearest manifestations of the Divine presence and grace. What are these manifestations? God makes the place of His feet glorious— 1. By the worship that is there rendered and accepted. 2. By the spiritual glory that is there created. "The glory of Lebanon," etc. The glory of the Church lies in the possession and exercise of the grandest and noblest moral principles—those that are most assimilated to the Divine nature. The true purpose of the Church, the final end of its warfare, is to be a living witness to mankind of these moral principles, to be an embodied protest against all the money-worship and pleasure-worship, and therefore worship of the world; to be a revelation to man of higher interests and blessings, and a Diviner greatness. It is when she is most distinctly Godlike and Christlike that men fall down and confess that God is in her of a truth. "The glory of the Lord is then risen upon her." 3. By attracting immense and various multitudes from all quarters of the globe to His Church. Though numbers be not the chief, they are a real element of glory. 4. By the blessedness there conferred. All the elements of the Church's glory hitherto enumerated are elements of blessedness; but there are other special sources of that blessedness. (1) There is the blessedness of inviolable security. The greatest earthly monarchy has no power to protect itself against assault, against even successful assault. It is the glory of

God's house that it is safe. It is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. (2) The absolute and unspeakable splendour of the Church—the splendour of her purity—the splendour of her joy. (*J. Riddell.*)

Ver. 14. **The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee.**—*Honour done to the Church:*—A promise like this is made to the Church of Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 9); and it is intended to be—1. A mortification to the proud oppressors of the Church. 2. An exaltation to the poor, oppressed ones of the Church. 2. And this is the honour that shall be done them: they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those alive that have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. (*M. Henry.*) **The city of the Lord.**—*The city of the Lord:*—1. He hath built it for the honour of His majesty. 2. It bears His name. 3. He hath fortified it with impregnable walls and bulwarks. 4. He hath beautified it with the graces of His spirit. 5. He hath replenished it with the blessings of His goodness. 6. He hath felicitated it with His gracious presence. 7. It is the city wherein reside the peculiar people of God, who are the beloved of the Lord, on whom His eyes and His heart are continually fixed. 8. He esteems it above all the kingdoms and empires of the world. (*R. Macculloch.*) *An ideal city:*—That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which He owns, in which He dwells, in which religion is uppermost. (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 16. **Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles.**—*The Church served by nations and kings:*—The nations and their kings now give up to the Church their vital substance, as a mother or nurse gives to the child the milk of her breasts; and the Church thereby has rich nourishment for prosperous growth, ever fresh material for joy and thanksgiving. We can by no means think of enrichment by plunder; the sucking is that of a child, not a vampire. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Religion advanced by wealth and power:*—All interpreters agree with the Targum in applying this verse to the influx of wealth and power and whatever else the kings and nations of the earth can contribute to the progress of the true religion. The figure is derived from Deut. xxxiii. 19. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The perpetual excellencies of the Gospel Church* (vers. 15, 16):—Considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the Gospel Church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament Church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the "joy of many generations." Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated. 1. She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations and their kings that are brought to embrace Christianity shall lay themselves out for the good of the Church, and maintain its interests with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breast. 2. She shall find herself countenanced by her God. "Thou shalt know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour," etc. (*M. Henry.*) *Sucking the milk of the nations:*—Not suck their blood—that is not the spirit of the Gospel. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 17. **For brass I will bring gold.**—*The kingdom of God:*—This passage occurs amid the glowing prophecies concerning the millennial kingdom. It has, however, its application to the kingdom in its present state. I. THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST RECOGNIZES DIFFERENT GRADES, QUALITIES, VALUES, USES. Each of these is most effective in its own place. We would much sooner commit ourselves to a vessel of steel than to one whose hull was made of gold. No greater calamity could happen to the world than to turn all substances into gold. In the Church variety of talent and gifts, differences of classes are essential to prosperity. God never repeats Himself. Equality is impossible, and if possible would be disastrous. II. ALL THINGS TAKE ON ENHANCED VALUE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. "For brass I will bring gold," etc. Wherever the Church of Christ comes, instantly all things leap into higher value—property, schools, trade, institutions, government, the family, the individual. You may interrogate in just four different directions—Nature, the Rational World, Sin, the Kingdom. Nature replies: "I change nothing. I furnish the ore; I cannot bring out the metal; I can't change even the place of a stone." Rational World replies: "I can change the shapes, the places,

the combinations of things, but I cannot change the substances. I cannot turn iron into silver, wood into brass, stones into iron." Sin rises in its black monstrosity, and says: "Yes, I have power to change. I can reach up, lay my hand on the twenty-two carat gold and drag it down to silver; I can drag the silver down to brass, the brass to iron, the iron to stone, the stone to wood, the wood I can burn with the torch of hate, and scatter the ashes on the red-hot floor of hell—I can do that!" Sin can drag the genius or the archangel down to the abyss of a hopeless hades. It is only the Kingdom that can say: "Everything I touch shall increase in value. I can take even the devil's outcasts and change them into burning seraphs." III. THIS ENHANCEMENT OF VALUES IS BY AND THROUGH SUCCESSIVE GRADES—wood, stone, iron, brass, silver, gold. God's method of working is by development through grades. There is no such thing as reaching perfection at a bound. It is a walk, a race—meaning steady progress by steps. IV. THE DIVINE AGENCY IS EMPHASIZED. "I will bring." Transformations in human nature are effected through Divine power and grace. (*A. McE. Wylie.*) *The golden age:*—The golden age of humanity is in the future. This age is here represented as so far excelling all future ages as gold excels brass. Morally this may include three things. I. THAT FOR PRACTICAL ATHEISM THERE WILL BE GODLINESS. II. THAT FOR DOMINANT MATERIALISM THERE WILL BE SPIRITUALITY. III. THAT FOR CONTROLLING SELFISHNESS THERE WILL BE BENEVOLENCE. (*Homilist.*) *The wonderful exchange:*—This seems like a very unthrifty kind of commerce. It promises only the most speedy and utter bankruptcy. Surely one making such an offer must have great treasures, and great love. There must be a perfect confidence that there can be no exhaustion of treasure, nor any exhaustion in the delight of perpetually giving others the best end of the bargain. No one can have such confidence and feeling but God. It is God, the infinite, who proposes to give gold for brass. It is just what He is constantly doing in nature, giving out the best for the worst. God always sees and seeks the highest possible thing in every nature. And He wants us to catch His penetrative insight. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived the glories God hath prepared for those who love Him." But God is constantly trying to reveal them unto us by His Spirit. He is ever trying to give us gold for brass, and silver for iron. This ought to be good news for man. He is always willing to get the best end of a bargain. Now there are various kinds of life, and many degrees of each kind. There is what is known as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual life. Evidently there is life that is as clay, as ore, as iron, as brass, as silver, as gold. God all the time offers to every man to change his hard iron of life into brass, his brass into silver, his silver into gold. How does He propose to do it? On precisely the principles that man acts in every-day life. Indeed, God has made it impossible for men to succeed at all in the life that now is, except in the laws that give success in the life to come. Just as man gives muscle for bread, or exertion of muscle that all the delights of life may be his, just as he gives a few midnights to study that he may be everlastingly wise, just as he gives self-denial that he may have exuberance of strength, just as he gives all the things that he hath, in order that he may keep his life, so God always asks your iron when He would give brass, asks your brass when He would give silver, asks your silver when He would give gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and have crowns of eternal glory. The trouble with men is they give their muscle for bread, but will not give iron to God for brass. I think it is a statement capable of vindication, that God does not enrich by legacy, but by exchange. Every one that is endowed is in great peril. Look at the great heroes that God has made in our history: they fill the earth and rise into the skies. Were they endowed? Not one, except with faculties; they had to develop their virtues. So in the case of all moral greatness. God gives the conditions, the opportunities; but man must work with God. Did the human soul that Christ associated with Himself submit to this plan of development, and especially did the Son of God, begotten in holiness and perfection, submit Himself to this law that has been applied to all men? If this shall be answered in the affirmative, we must conclude that there is no other possible way to greatness and road to perfection. It is evident at first glance, that the man Christ Jesus constantly accepted this law. He was obedient to His parents, giving up His will to them. His announced principle of life was: "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." He gave up the riches of silver, and for our sakes became poor. He vacated the throne of the universe and became Servant of servants of men. The Lord of life became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He gave up all silver, brass, iron, stones, and wood. Was there any gold in return?

"Wherefore, because of this, God hath highly exalted Him." There can be no mistake. We see plainly the way to highest strength of character and greatest height of glory. It is not the way of present gratification, of selfishness, of the pursuit of personal and family ends, but a giving up of personal good for God's higher good, a selling of lower for higher. Once God opened the windows of heaven and poured out water enough to drown a world. Then He takes that great deluge of abundance and makes it an emblem of the abundance of spiritual blessings. Bring the tithes into the storehouse, the little tenths of daily gain, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 18. **But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation.**—*Walls, salvation; gates, praise:*—Consider how salvation is a wall, and how gates are praise. 1. There are three safeties which a sinner wants. He wants to be saved (1) From the condemnation of his sins. (2) From the power of his sins. (3) From the conflict and presence of His sins. Therefore a man's salvation comes to him with three unfoldings. This threefold salvation is, to every man that receives it, as a wall. On the one side, towards the adversary, it is a wall of fire; on the other side, as it shows itself to him that is within it, it is shelter. It is beauteous, as with all bright and precious stones, inlaid with all the loveliness and the attributes of God. And whatever comes through that wall to touch a man has first touched and pierced his Saviour; for all the faithfulness of God, and all the power of God, and all the glory of God, and all the work of the great Mediator, go to make the eternity and the sufficiency of that great bulwark. 2. "Thou shalt call thy gates Praise." What is praise? The joy of a happy spirit, pouring itself back into the bosom of God as its only fountain. Through the walls of salvation, the Christian enters into a perfect peace —that with a happy heart he may go out praisingly. In every object in nature, he likes to see some reflection of an unseen world; in every providence, he traces a Father's hand. He has thoughts high above, that make him walk this world an independent man. Heaven is gilding all the distance to him. He comes at last to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon his head." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **Thy gates Praise.**—*Songs and hymns* have ever been the most interesting and inspiring of human compositions; if we draw a line of arbitrary distinction between the two, then I would say that Song represents the music of the blood, while the Hymn represents the music of the soul. It is in song that we utter the music of Nature; it is in the hymn we utter the music of grace and Divine holiness. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The gates of Praise:*—I do not wonder that the gates of the Church are called Praise. I do not wonder at it, because it is clear that praise opens—no! we cannot tell what are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge until we have passed through the gates of Praise. We do not know what God hath reserved for them that love Him, until we have passed through the gates of Praise. As we sometimes walk on from step to step, from landing-place to landing-place, and scene to scene, until at last we reach some elevation, when the whole of the grand panorama bursts upon our astonished vision, and the walk, and the steep ascent, and the hill, and even the beauties of the way, are alike forgotten in the overwhelming splendour of the scene; so is it when we are able to pass through, or even to look through, the gates of Praise; even the consolations of prayer are all lost by reason of the glory that excelleth; we step from the finite to the infinite, when we look over the scenery, or breathe the atmosphere of praise. (*Ibid.*) *The gates of Praise:*—I. PRAISE IS THE GATE BY WHICH WE PASS OUT OF OURSELVES. II. IT IS BY THIS PATH THAT THE BELIEVER PASSES INTO NEW RELATIONS. He enters the Church through "the gates of Praise." It is impossible that there can be an ungrateful Christian. III. Gates within gates, gates to the city, and gates within the city; THE GATEWAY BY WHICH WE PASS TO HIGHER KNOWLEDGE, AND TO HIGHER LIFE, IS PRAISE. (*Ibid.*) *Praise because of salvation:*—The Rabbins say that when God created the universe He asked the highest seraph what he thought of the work of His hands—and he replied that nothing was wanting but that it should become vocal, and be able audibly to speak its Maker's praise. But in the work of salvation it is so: "to Him that sitteth on the throne" it rises in the grandeur of loud peals of harmony. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 19. **The sun shall be no more thy light by day.**—*The lower giving place to the higher:*—The prophet bids his people look forward to a time when even the sun and moon shall become needless to them; when in some new and more direct

experience of God they shall need nothing to reflect His light to them, but drink immediately from Himself His strength and inspiration. That seems to be the meaning of the words; and so it points us to one feature which belongs to every progress, the power to do without one thing after another which has before been essential, the way in which, as we advance to higher and higher supplies, we are able to gather out of them what we used to get from lower sources. It is like that verse in St. John's description of the New Jerusalem: "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Or like these soberer words of St. Paul's autobiography: "When I became a man I put away childish things." This life that rises to the highest helps and companies is able easily to do without the lower. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *Things once needed may cease to be necessary*:—As we climb a high mountain we must keep our footing strong upon one ledge until we have fastened ourselves strongly on the next. Then we may let the lower foothold go. The lives of men who have been always growing are strewed along their whole course with the things which they have learned to do without. As the track of an army marching deep into an enemy's country is scattered all along with the equipage which the men seemed to find necessary when they started, but which they have learned to do without as the exigencies of their march grew greater, and they found that these provisions and equipments were partly such as they did not need at all, and partly such as they could gather out of the land through which they marched; so from the time when the child casts his leading strings aside because his legs are strong enough to carry him alone, the growing man goes on for ever leaving each help for a higher, until at last, in that great change to which Isaiah's words seem to apply, he can do without sun and moon as he enters into the immediate presence and essential life of God. (*Ibid.*) *A token of growth*:—As we grow we come to the capacity of higher pleasures and higher occupations, and so let go the lower ones; not by compulsion, because we cannot hold them any longer, but from the satisfaction of our newer lives; because we have got something else better than they are, and can do without them now. (*Ibid.*) *The symbol and the reality*:—Let us take two or three instances of those things which are valuable as symbols, but which he is able to do without who has got beyond the symbol and gained the reality which it represents. 1. Take the instance of wealth. There are some men who can do without being rich—plenty of men who have to, but some men who can, can easily, can without discontent or trouble. They love comfort and respectability as much as these their neighbours. What is the difference? Simply this, that they have found that comfort and respectability, while money is their natural symbol, are not dependent upon money, and that one may reach past the symbol, and take the reality, and let the symbol go. 2. Or take another symbol. Praise is good. To be applauded by our fellow-men, to hear our ambitions about ourselves caught up by their testifying cheers, to have our own best hopes for our own lives confirmed by their appreciation of us, that is a true delight for any man. To be able to do without men's praise because we do not feel its value, because morosely and selfishly we do not care what men think, that is bad; that is a sign of feebleness and conceit. To feel it is wretched, and to affect to feel it is detestable. But to be able to do without men's praise because that which their praise stands for is dearer to us than the praise is, and it so happens that we cannot have both of them, that is a wholly different thing. Men's praise stands for goodness. Every man feels that if it does not mean that, if it is given to iniquity just as freely as to goodness, praise loses all its value. Praise is the symbol; goodness is the reality. 3. So it runs everywhere. The symbols of the deeper pleasures are the mere animal indulgences—eating and drinking, the lusts of the flesh. They stand for intellectual and spiritual joys. How natural their symbolism is. The Bible talks of "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." David says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Jesus tells His disciples about "eating His flesh and drinking His blood." The superficial emotions of the senses stand for and represent the profound emotions of the soul. In the harmonious life the two will live in harmony. The symbol and reality, the body's and the soul's enjoyment, will be complete together. But when in this unharmonious life which we live the symbol and reality come into unnatural conflict, when either the soul must be sacrificed to the body or the body to the soul, he who really knows what the soul's happiness is does not hesitate. Here is the power of true self-sacrifice; here is the secret which takes out of it all the bitterness and brutality. Always it is the giving up of a symbol that you may have the reality. In the great sacrifice of all, Christ lays down His life, but it is that He may take it again. Do you think

that Christ did not care for life and all that makes life beautiful to us? Surely He did; but He cared more for that which they represent—the living purely, the doing of His Father's will, and the serving of His brethren. 4. I am very much impressed by the truth of all this as concerns the Christian Church. She has her symbols and her ordinances, and she has her true and inner life. Her outward ways of living really belong with her inward power. In a perfectly harmonious world there never could be any conflict. In heaven the outward and the inward Church shall absolutely correspond; but here and now the Church may be so set upon her symbols and her regularities that she shall fail of doing her most perfect work and living her most perfect life. The Christian may be so bound to rites and ceremonies that he loses the God to whom they ought to bring him near. Here it certainly is true that no symbol is doing its true work unless it is educating those who use it to do without itself if need be. (*Ibid.*) *Important questions:*—1. First you will ask, How can I tell the symbol from the reality, and so know what things it is good to hold less and less, what things it is good to hold more and more indispensable? It is not easy to give the answer in a rule. But the answer no doubt lies in a certain feeling of spirituality and infiniteness and eternity, which belongs to those things which it is good for a man not to be able to do without. Those things which serve the soul rather than the body, those which serve the whole of us and not one special part, and those which can serve us longest—those are the things which we want to make more and more indispensable. Those things whose usefulness belongs mainly to the body, those things which help some part of us and not the whole, and those things whose use is temporary—it is not good for any of us to have to say, "I cannot do without these things." This is, perhaps, the nearest that we can come to rules; but he who lives in the spirit of these rules acquires a certain sort of feeling of the infiniteness of some things and the finiteness of others, so that renown, wealth, dignity, sympathy, comfort, friendship, amusement, life, stand on one side; and honour, truth, bravery, purity, love, eternity, God, stand on the other. These last he must have. Those others he can do without. The moment that he touches any new gift he can tell to which order it belongs. 2. But then you say, What then? When I have felt this difference, when I know what things I must not allow to become indispensable to me, what shall I do then? Shall I throw all those things away? Shall I strip my life instantly of all that is not indispensable, and live only in those things which I cannot live without? No; certainly not. That effort to cast away the symbol as soon as it was seen to be a symbol has been the source of much religious unhappiness and failure, and of much of the wrong kind of separation between religious and irreligious life. Not to give up the symbol, but to hold it as a symbol, with that looser grasp which lets its inner reality escape into us, and at the same time makes us always ready to let it go when the reality shall have wholly opened from it, that is the true duty of the Christian as concerns the innocent things of the world. That was the way in which Jesus always seemed to be holding friendship, home, nature, and His own human life; never grasping them so tightly that their spiritual meanings might not come forth from them freely, nor that He could not give them up when a higher vocation summoned Him. 3. And that brings us to the last question. How shall I come to count nothing indispensable but what I really ought to, what I really cannot do without? The answer to that question is in Christ, who holds the answers of all our questions for us. As I read the Gospels I can see how, little by little, Jesus lifted those disciples past one conception of necessity after another, until at last they knew nothing that was absolutely necessary except God. They began as fishermen who could not do without their nets and boats and houses and fishing friends and sports and gains and gossipings. He carried them up till they were crying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 20. **Thy sun shall no more go down.**—*The world of light:*—I. THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHT. "The Lord." This is true even of the present world. The light which reason sheds on our path is a ray of His kindling. But here, in this world of ours, there are generally intermediate sources through which the light we have is conveyed to us. It does not come directly from God. In the heavenly world, however, it will be different. There, every intermediate agency will be done away, and the light that shines will shine immediately from God. There are four things symbolized in the Bible by this word "light," and all that we shall know or possess of each of these four things in heaven, we shall know or possess through Jesus. 1. Knowledge (Ps. cxix. 130). 2. Holiness (Rom. xiii. 12). 3. Happiness

(Ps. xcvii. 11). 4. Beauty or glory (John xvii. 24). In this lower world we know how true it is that there is no beauty or glory that the eye takes in for which we are not indebted to the light that shines from yonder natural sun. In heaven Jesus is the Sun that shines on all. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE LIGHT. Three elements of it are mentioned in our text. When we decompose the light of the natural sun, seven rays or colours are the result of the analysis. But these seven we know may be resolved into three—the red, the yellow, and the blue. Thus there is a trinity of rays or elements in the light which the natural sun is pouring forth continually. And it is an interesting thing to find that when we come to analyze the light of the heavenly world, the same feature is found to mark it. 1. There is one ray in this light which may be called the continuous ray. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself." 2. We have here a perpetual ray. "An everlasting light." To speak of the perpetual, as well as the continuous nature of this light, is not a distinction without a difference. You may have light that is continuous for a season even when you know that it cannot be perpetual. 3. The third ray may be characterized as a joyous ray. "The days of thy mourning shall be ended." (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The saint on earth and in heaven:*—The words present us with two different views of truth. I. THEY TELL US OF OUR PRESENT STATE. 1. It is a state of change—vicissitude—perpetual alteration. The sun rises to set; it sets to rise. The moon waxes and wanes. 2. The words point us to our present state of comparative darkness; for the contrast is between the minor light of the sun, the lesser light of the moon, and the glorious light of the Lord. 3. The words present us, too, with a picture of a state of mourning: "The days of thy mourning shall be ended." II. THEY OPEN TO US A GLORIOUS PROSPECT. There are two blessings especially pointed out to us here. 1. Perfect light. 2. Perfect happiness. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The present and future state of the people of God:*—I. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. A state of darkness and of sorrow. To what causes can such experience be ascribed? 1. To their remaining ignorance, and the imperfection of their present views. 2. This may be the case under a sense of the prevalence of sin, and especially of unbelief. 3. They may be in such a situation also, from the Lord withdrawing from them the sensible communications of spiritual light and comfort. II. THEIR FUTURE STATE. A state of uninterrupted light, of perpetual cessation from sorrow, consequently of endless joy. The Lord shall be the everlasting light of His people. 1. As He will give them a more enlarged capacity of knowing and enjoying Him. 2. He will afford them more perfect discoveries of Himself. 3. He will afford them more enlarged views of His works and ways. 4. He will impart to them the fullest assurance of their interest in His peculiar regard. 5. He will be their everlasting Light. (*D. Dickson.*) *The eternal day:*—1. Israel of old had light while all the rest of the world sat in darkness. This typical Church of God abode not in the light continually, its history was chequered with alternate brightness and gloom, repentance and relapse, prosperity and adversity. 2. Another dispensation came; Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel," and the sun shone upon the earth as it had never done before. A visible Church was called out to walk in the light, which Church still exists upon the earth, and from the days of Pentecost until now its sun has never altogether gone down, neither has its moon withdrawn herself. The light has not been always equally clear, but it has been still day. 3. But there is a Church upon the earth which is within the visible Church, and is its central life. I refer to the spiritual Church. This secret Church, this Church mystical, this true body of our Lord Jesus Christ, may claim to have had this text fulfilled in its experience in a far larger sense. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Yet even to the Church spiritual the text has not been fulfilled in its largest conceivable sense, for I fear me that to the most spiritual some darkness comes. Their light is sown, but it has not yet sprung up to its full harvest. 4. We must, therefore, refer to a fourth form of the Church. If we see it not at all in the typical, a little in the visible, very much in the spiritual, we find it all in the Church triumphant. The full triumph of the Church of Christ shall begin in the millennium. I. THE LIGHT OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH SHALL BE INCESSANT. "Thy sun shall no more go down," etc. There will be no intervening nights of darkness, but one long noonday of purity and felicity, "the days of her mourning shall be ended." And why will this be? 1. Because the light of heaven is independent of creatures. In heaven the saints will need no teacher. When God sends a true preacher he is a star in God's right hand, and the

Church is bound to value his light, which is the gift of heaven, but we shall need no teachers there; we shall see, not through a glass darkly, but face to face. Up there they need no comforters to succour them in the time of their distress, for God Himself has wiped away all tears from their eyes. Poor saints will not then be dependent upon the alms or the consolations of others, though once their generous friends were like sun and moon to them. 2. Because it is cleared of all clouding elements. Here below in the Church of God, whatever by God's grace may be our light, errors will arise to cloud it; evil men come in unawares and distract God's saints. There are none such up yonder. Satan himself shall be shut out. 3. The saints themselves shall be so purified that nothing in them shall darken their light. Here to-day Christ changes not, but we change, and hence our joy departs. It shall not be so there. Notice that the text hints that both the major and the minor necessities of saints will be abundantly supplied. Have you not found sometimes that the Lord Jesus Christ has withdrawn Himself from you? Then your "sun" has gone down. You are prospering in business; God gives you all that heart can wish, the moon does not withdraw herself, but the sun has gone, and woe beclouds your spirit. It will never be so in heaven, you shall see your Lord face to face without a veil between, and that eternally. Here, on the other hand, at times Jesus has shone upon you, and as to spiritual things you have been rich, but then earthly trouble has hovered over you, the "moon" has withdrawn herself. Not often have both sun and moon been as flesh and blood would have them. True, you have been able to do without the moon in the presence of the sun, but you would have preferred both spiritual and temporal prosperity. Now in heaven all the wants of our nature will be completely supplied. 4. The Church triumphant will be delivered from the vicissitudes of those seasons which cause the going down of sun and moon. I do not refer to summer and winter, but to ecclesiastical and temporal arrangements, such as the Sabbath and times of assembly and Church fellowship. It was a glad day for Israel when the trumpets rang out the morning of the Jubilee, for every slave was free, and every debtor found his liabilities discharged. Back came each man's lost inheritance, and the whole nation was glad. With sound of trumpet and of cornet they saluted the rising of the sun on the first day of that Jubilee year; but the jubilee year went by, and lands were mortgaged and forfeited, and slaves fell again into slavery, and bankrupts were again seized by their creditors. We are coming to a jubilee, of which the trumpets shall sound for ever. II. THE LIGHT OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH IS EVERLASTING. "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." Why will the perfection and bliss of the saints triumphant never end? 1. Because the God from whom it comes is eternal. 2. The covenant by which the saints stand in heaven is a sure one. 3. The guarantee of that covenant can never fail, seeing it is Christ Himself. "Because I live ye shall live also" is the great seal set upon the indentures by which we hold our inheritance in the skies. 4. Those who possess heaven are also themselves immortal. III. THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT SHALL BE BOUNDLESS. "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." The Lord is infinite. If He is our sun there can be no limit to the light in which we shall rejoice. 1. If God is to be our light, then in every separate believer there will be a perfect light of bliss and holiness. You are aged, you feel also that you are full of infirmities and sins; now, these will all vanish, and that weakened form of yours shall be raised in power. Your ignorance will give place to the light of knowledge, your sin to the light of purity, your sorrow to the light of joy. 2. In addition to your possessing personal light, you will enjoy the closest possible fellowship with God. 3. This glorious light will give us the clearest views of Gospel truth. 4. There, no doubt, we shall understand more of Providence. Here our sun goes down sometimes as to the Divine dealings; we cannot make out what He means; the lines are dark and bending; we thought He would have led us by a straight course, but we wind to and fro in the wilderness. All the happiness which knowledge and understanding can bring to intelligent beings shall be at our feet. 5. There we shall receive the utmost endurable joy. Some have thought the joy of heaven would lie in knowledge; they shall have it. Others have rejoiced in the prospect of continued service; they shall serve Him day and night in His temple. The sweetest thought of heaven to me is rest, and I shall have it, for "there remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." Peace! O quiet soul, do you not long for it? You shall have it. Security and a sense of calm! O tempest-tossed one, you shall have them. Strength, power—some have wished for that. You shall be raised in power. Fulness, the filling up of every vacuum! You shall have it; you shall be filled with all the fulness of God. IV. THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IS UNMINGLED. "The days of thy

mourning shall be ended." 1. The mourning from a persecuting world. 2. There will be no more mourning from the common trials of life. 3. Then shall we be delivered from all mourning caused by our inward sin. 4. We shall be delivered from every kind of mourning as to an absent God, for we shall never grieve Him any more. 5. I find that one version reads it, "The days of thy mourning shall be recompensed," and I say this to those who have to mourn more than others: you shall have a recompense. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 21. **Thy people also shall be all righteous.**—*The people of God considered as righteous*:—I. AS THEY ARE ALL INTERESTED IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST JESUS. II. AS BY THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEY HAVE AN INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS WROUGHT IN THEM. III. BY ABOUNDING IN WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD. Here two cautions are necessary, to prevent mistakes. 1. Virtuous actions do not constitute a person inherently righteous, but declare him so; as good fruit is rather a declaration of the goodness of the tree, than the thing which constitutes that goodness. Therefore, 2. Virtuous actions cannot be said to be necessary to salvation, in the same sense in which inherent holiness is so. It is possible that, where holiness is implanted, life may be so quickly taken away that there shall be no room for its discovering itself by the outward behaviour. Taking these cautions along with us, the necessity of works of righteousness, though not as a ground of our justification, yet, as an evidence of it, can never be too strongly asserted. Every motive, whether from interest or gratitude, whether from the beauty of religion or the pleasures of a virtuous life, still remains in full force. We further observe, that the reward of saints hereafter shall bear some proportion to their progress in holiness here below. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) *A righteous people*:—The prophet here predicts the elevation of the Church to its normal or ideal state, a change of which we may already see the rudiments, however far we may get from its final consummation. (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Ver. 22. **A little one shall become a thousand.**—*The amplitude of the Church*:—The Church of Christ has been often subject to persecution in past ages; but at a future time it will obtain general protection and patronage. I. THE IMPORT OF THE PROPHECY. After a careful examination of the text in connection with the former part of the chapter, I am led to conclude that it refers, primarily and in part, to the time when our Lord appeared as "the Light of men," a "Sun of righteousness" to illuminate a benighted world, and graciously introduced His kingdom and dispensation upon earth: but that the principal and pre-eminent fulfilment of the prophecy is reserved for a future and happier era than men have ever yet witnessed. The slight and partial fulfilment of the prediction in the primitive age seems to have been only a shadowy resemblance of its more complete accomplishment hereafter. II. AT WHAT PERIOD THE PREDICTION WILL BE FULFILLED. "I the Lord will hasten it in his time"—not before the proper time—but in its season—in due time. We are not justified, by the spirit of our religion, in cherishing an unhallowed curiosity or presumptuous confidence in our attempts to ascertain the purposes of God. It is on the wings of faith and hope, not those of pride and speculation, that the Christian is authorized to soar. Yet whilst a sacred obscurity invests the whole of this mysterious subject, there seems to be ample encouragement given to those who are disposed to pursue their investigations with a devout and docile disposition—with a sober and humble mind. III. CONCLUDING REMARKS. 1. The certainty of these events. 2. Our duty in prospect of such events. (1) To anticipate with delight the approaching happiness of the world. (2) The crisis that is approaching calls upon us to aim at a superior degree of piety. (*T. Sims, M.A.*) *The miraculous propagation of the Gospel*:—I. THE MATTER OF FACT ITSELF, to which this prophecy refers,—how swift and strange a progress the Gospel made at, and after its first setting out in, Jerusalem. II. THIS SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL WAS CERTAINLY MIRACULOUS, and owing chiefly to the mighty operations of the Holy Spirit, and for this plain reason: because the natural and visible causes which concurred to the production of this great effect were not any ways equal to the effect produced. The Gospel of Christ, at its earliest appearance, had all the probabilities in the world against its success: for it was possessed scarcely of any one of those advantages which do most signally recommend a new doctrine, and make it thrive. It had no complying tenets, to soothe men's appetites and passions. It had no encouragement, no protection from the civil power; no force or cunning to uphold it; no men of eminence and esteem to engage on its side. The age which was pitched upon for the discovery

of it was more discerning and enlightened, more curious and inquisitive, than, perhaps, any that either preceded or followed it; and therefore the success of this doctrine could not be owing to men's ignorance or supineness. Finally, its promulgators delivered it out not by parcels, as is the way of cunning and designing men; but offered the whole of it to be altogether examined and compared. Nevertheless, though pressed with all these encumbrances, it sprang forth, and made its way into the world by a swift and incredible progress. The inference from hence is plain and indubitable: that a Divine power and virtue certainly went along with it, to supply what was wanting to it upon other accounts. III. CONSIDER WHAT SHIFTS THE ENEMIES OF THE GOSPEL MAKE USE OF, TO EVADE THE FORCE OF THIS PRESSING ARGUMENT. It is true, they will own, Christians multiplied very fast, and the increase of them was, in some sense, miraculous: that is, it was wonderful; as every unusual thing is to those who do not know or consider the causes of it. But to a man, they say, who dares to go out of the common road, and to think for himself, it will appear that there was at that time a set of natural causes on foot, sufficient to account for this effect, without any recourse to a Divine and supernatural agent. *E. g.* The sufferings of the martyrs made mighty impressions upon men. The purity of the Christian morals was a mighty argument to bring the men of probity and virtue into the interests of the Gospel. The analogy of some of its mystical truths to the doctrines of Plato (then in great esteem) was a very good bait to the men of learning. The distribution of goods which the first Christians made, and their living together in common, was a good reason for many men's embracing that faith which, they were sure, would maintain them. The casual cessation of oracles was immediately turned to the advantage of the religion of Christ, as if that had procured it. And the destruction of the Jewish State contributed greatly to the increase of the Christian numbers; because it seemed to have been foretold by the Founder of their faith: and, therefore, luckily coming to pass about that time, raised a high opinion in men of His Person and doctrine. The causes here assigned were utterly insufficient to produce the event for which they are assigned. IV. SHOW HOW GREAT AN ADVANTAGE IT IS TO THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION TO HAVE BEEN PROPAGATED AFTER SO SWIFT AND UNACCOUNTABLE A MANNER. No other religion ever had so large an increase with so little of human aid. V. INQUIRE INTO THE TIME WHEN, AND THE MANNER HOW, THIS MIRACLE CEASED, and make suitable reflections upon it with regard both to those who lived then, when this check was given to the Gospel, and to us who live now. The plain answer to the inquiry proposed is that the miracle ceased when the civil power began to declare openly in behalf of Christianity; that is, soon after Constantine came to the throne. For it was no longer a wonder that our religion should thrive and flourish when, instead of bitter persecutions, it met with all manner of encouragements. For a century after Constantine, and upwards, the number of Christians multiplied exceedingly in all the parts of the world in which it had already been planted, and to which the empire of the Romans, or their influence, did extend. For above a century after that, Christianity seems to have been at a stand. But then it declined apace every day; dissensions among Christians grew hot, and their zeal for religion waxed cold. The great honours and endowments which religious princes had bestowed on the Church did too often occasion ambition and luxury in those who contended for them, or possessed them. In a word, all the vices of prosperity abounded, together with the advantages of it. So that the name of Christianity was no longer venerable in the eyes of men; and its holy doctrine, not producing an answerable sanctity of life, made no further impressions upon them. This unhappy opportunity Mohammed laid hold of to set up his religion; which, being suited to the voluptuous manners of the East, and seconded by the power of the sword, made large inroads into Christendom, and tore away entire provinces at once from the profession of the Gospel. (*F. Atterbury, D.D.*) *The law of life and increase:*—So is it with every institution planted in the fear and love of God, with an aim to advance His glory and man's good. Its life and increase are assured, for it becomes God's work and enlists God's aid. The first hospital was founded by a Christian woman in her own house just outside the gates of Rome. Now there are hundreds in every land. So we may trace the rise and growth of institutions for the poor and the insane; of the universities, once small conventual schools where Christian truth was taught, developing into comprehensive and influential seats of learning. So, notably, the growth of the missionary enterprise. The latter was almost unknown a century ago. It began in the "reveries" of men or the dreams of Christian women, who began by collecting small amounts and consecrating them to Christ. Now modern missions

are a power, immense, world-embracing. They emphatically illustrate the grace of Christ, present and dominant in the world. So it is with every endeavour. That which has the element of righteousness in it, God will care for. It has a vast future before it. Here, then, is illustrated the indebtedness of the race to the Gospel of Christ. Men of the world sometimes fancy that this matter of religion is an obstacle to their secular plans. But, for the very instruments they use in art and commerce and literature, they are more or less directly indebted to Christianity. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Spiritual growth*:—This law of life and increase obtains in the growth of gracious affections in our own hearts. We seem at times to be making but little progress; but we have this pledge, "A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation." Christ's mighty energy is at work in us, as in society, impressing His image on all things. (*Ibid.*) *The thousand and the one*:—There is a threefold line of thought in this passage; three points of contrast in the prophet's mind between the old world, the world in which he himself lived, and that new world, our world, of Christ and Christianity. I. He says that the old world magnified masses, the thousands; whereas IN THAT NEW WORLD WHICH CHRIST IS TO BRING, OR RATHER HAS NOW BROUGHT, NOT THE MASS BUT THE INDIVIDUAL IS TO BE THE POWERFUL THING. Imagine if an angel were to come to me to-day to offer to prepare me for the study of ancient history. I say to him, "Will you show me the secret of the old world's greatness?" And in answer he takes me up on a lofty mountain and shows me immense masses. "Do you see that Chinese Empire," he says, "do you see that long line of ancestors going back, back, back further than the eye can see? That is the secret of China's greatness. Do you see that great Indian Continent —that long line of caste going back into antiquity; the thousand? That is the secret of India's greatness. Do you see that Jewish Empire? Do you see that long family tree going back to Abraham, and further back still to the very foundation of all things? That is the secret of Judea's greatness." The old world magnified the thousand. But now let us take another side of it. Suppose this angel came to me and said, "I have come to prepare you for a study of modern history, of the world of Christ's time," and I say, "Well, I should like very much to get a specimen of the difference here. I wish you to show me the secret of England's greatness during the last century (the nineteenth). Let me see, first of all, the secret of England's greatness in mechanical powers." I have not the slightest doubt that in answer he is going to take me at once into the dockyards where the thousand hammers are clanging and all the mechanical powers are at work. Instead of that, to my astonishment, he takes me through to Glasgow; he passes down the Clyde; he comes to Greenock, and he never looks at the shipping; he passes it altogether. He takes me through the streets, turns into a gloomy, narrow entry, climbs the stair, opens the door, and, lo! in a humble room and in a very small crib there lies a delicate infant, and he points to it and says, "That is the secret of England's mechanical greatness." "What!" I say, "that puny thing that a breath would put out like a candle?" "Yes," he says, "that is the secret of England's mechanical greatness. That is James Watt; that is the one that has taken the place of the thousand." Or suppose I say to him, "I want to see the secret of England's scientific greatness in the last century." I have no doubt whatever that he is going to take me into the laboratories where the thousand workmen are plying with the crucible, the pestle, and the mortar. Instead of that he takes me up to Grantham, into the village school, and there, at the very foot of the class, sits a very dull-looking boy, more distinguished for fighting than for anything else. He says, "That is the secret of England's greatness in science. That is Isaac Newton. That one is going to take the place of the thousand in years to come." Or yet again, suppose I say to him, "I wish you would show me the secret of England's religious greatness in the last century." I have no doubt whatever that he is going to take me into the great cathedrals where the aisles are dark with worshippers. Instead of that he takes me up to a little place called Epworth at midnight, where there is a minister's manse on fire, and they are carrying out a screaming infant from the house. And the angel cries, "That is the secret of England's religious greatness. That is John Wesley, one time to have his screams heard all over England, all over Europe. The one little fire-burned child will in time to come take the place of the thousand." And why is it that I attribute this to Christianity? You might say, "What has Christ to do with this?" It is because if you and I go back nineteen centuries we shall see all Europe sleeping in an egg-shell: a little child; a little child laid outside in a stable. There it lay, holding all Europe in its little breast; its evolutions, its revolutions, its convolutions; its wars and rumours of wars; its

cries for bread; its cries for light; its cries for liberty. The One has taken the place of the thousand. II. The second point of the prophet I take to be this: that IN THE NEW WORLD THAT CHRIST HAS BROUGHT IN, THE GLORY CONSISTS IN THIS, THAT THE ONE INDIVIDUAL CAN PASS BY SYMPATHY THROUGH MYRIAD TYPES OF CHARACTER. One has become a thousand. Let me try to illustrate this by the case of two boarding-schools. I will call the one the boarding-school of the old world, and the other the boarding-school of the new. The boarding-school of the old world says, "Do you see these girls? In a few months you will not know your own little girl from any other. They will all become so like that no one could possibly distinguish the difference between them. The thousand shall become one—thoroughly Chinese." But the second boarding-school, Christ's boarding-school, says, "Will you give me this little girl of yours? She is just now very like other people. There is not much difference; but I will undertake to send this little girl through My school, and she will catch a little bit of everybody in the now vacant mirror of her mind, she will catch a little bit of every light." Why is it that I attribute this to Christ? It is because Christ Himself is many members in one body. Christ is our Representative before the throne of God. What does that mean? What is a representative before the throne? Why, it is a Member of Parliament. What is the function of a member for Glasgow? He has to take into the mirror of his mind all the different wants of the thousand, and give them due consideration. III. As a result of these points, the course of the old world has been still, stagnant, unprogressive; whereas IN THE NEW WORLD WHICH CHRIST HAS BROUGHT IN THINGS ARE TO MOVE WITH TREMENDOUS SPEED. "I the Lord will hasten it in its time" (R.V.). We commonly read it that God will hasten the time of its coming. I understand it to mean that there are times of acceleration, times when everything moves with double quick march; times when you take up the newspaper and find the unexpected has happened. This is what I understand, an accelerated progress; "The Lord will hasten it in its time." I wonder if there is any man here between eighty and ninety years old? If there is, that man has seen more events than all the history of the Chinese Empire from the beginning up till now! Think what he has seen. He has seen wings of steam—the steamboat; then he has seen wings of fire—the railroad; then wings of light—the telegraph; then wings of sound—the telephone. Aye, and he has seen something more than that; he has seen physical wings of memory—the phonograph. He has seen the voice bottled up in jars, and carried across the Atlantic. He has seen greater things than these. He has beheld social changes of the most momentous type. He has seen the institution of the rights of man; he has seen something greater still—the institution of the rights of woman. He has seen the bursting of the fetters of the slave; he has seen the birth of charity. It has been a world of wondrous acceleration. The power that can pass through these thousand changes must be Divine. You tell me that Christianity has not lived so long as some of the Eastern religions; that Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Parseeism have lived longer than Christianity. Yes, so they have; it is easy to be steadfast in a stagnant pool. "Better thirty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." The power of my Lord's religion is not its duration, it is the fact that its duration, such as it is, has been against tremendous odds. It is that the one has been battling ever with the thousand. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) I the Lord will hasten it in his time.—*The ministries of time*:—God is Sovereign and omnipotent, but He waits the ministration of time. He could force seasons and laws, but it is His way rather to work through them and by them. He has ordained them as servitors of His will. His purposes on the earth, in the conduct of human affairs, had, in respect to their accomplishment, a germination, a process, and a harvest-hour of consummation. Time is the prime-minister of Providence, and brings to pass in due order, at their full periods, and at the appointed juncture, the patient counsels of the Most High. There is no hurrying and no sickness of deferred hope on that eternal and tranquil Mind. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It lends a new dignity and a sterner and loftier majesty to time, when we consider it thus, not impersonally, as the passing away of our days—the swift, mute lapse of the stream of life sliding down the vale—but as a strong executive angel, a sceptred and conscious force that has it in charge to reveal and fulfil the hidden plan of God. (*A. L. Stone, D.D.*) *Time* is among men the revealer, the attester, the vindicator, the rectifier, the fulfiller. (*Ibid.*) *Time a test*:—1. Time tests the principles of human conduct. 2. Time is the test of friendships. 3. Time tries his tests upon character. 4. God even commits His own vindication to time. (*Ibid.*) *God's purpose sure of fulfilment*:—All that is here said relating to

the Jewish and Christian Church, to the militant and triumphant Church, and to every particular believer,—1. It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despaired of; but the God of almighty power hath undertaken it. I, the Lord, will do it, who can do it, and who have determined to do it. 2. It may seem to be delayed and put off so long that we are out of hopes of it; but, as the Lord will do it, so He will hasten it; will do it with all convenient speed—though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; He will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful. (*M. Henry.*)

CHAPTER LXI.

VERS. 1-3. **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me.**—*The Speaker; probably the Servant of Jehovah:*—Who is the speaker here? The Targum prefaces the passage with the words, "The prophet says," and, except a few, all modern expositors make the author of this book of consolation to be the speaker who, after having (in chap. lx.) let the Church behold the summit of her glory, now, with grateful look directed to Jehovah and rejoicing in spirit, extols his grand commission. But this view is objectionable, for the following reasons—1. Nowhere has the prophet yet spoken of himself as such in lengthy utterances, but rather (except in the closing words, "saith my God," in chap. lvii. 21) everywhere studiously kept himself in the background. 2. On the other hand, whenever another than Jehovah began to speak, and made reference to the work of his calling and his experiences connected therewith (as in chaps. xlix. 1 ff., l. 4 ff.) it was in such cases this self-same Servant of Jehovah of whom and to whom Jehovah speaks (see chaps. xlii. 1 ff., lii. 13 on to end of liii.). 3. All that the person here speaking says of himself is again met with in the picture of the one unique Servant of Jehovah; he has been endowed with the Spirit of Jehovah (chap. xlii. 1); Jehovah has sent him, and with him sent His Spirit (chap. xlviii. 16); he has a tongue that has been taught of God, to assist with words him who is wearied (chap. l. 4); those who are almost despairing and destroyed he goes to spare and save, preserving the broken reed and expiring wick (chap. xlii. 3); "to open blind eyes, to lead prisoners out of the prison, those who are sitting in darkness out of the house of confinement,"—this is what, above all, he has to do in word and deed for his people (chap. xlii. 7, xlix. 9). 4. After the prophet has represented the Servant of Jehovah, of whom he prophesies, as speaking in such dramatic directness (as in chaps. xlix. 1 ff., l. 4 ff., and also xlviii. 16 *b*.), one could not expect that he would now place himself in the foreground and claim for himself official attributes which he has set down as characteristic features in the picture of the predicted One, who (as Vitringa well says) not merely proclaims but dispenses the new and great gifts of God. For these reasons we (with Nägelsbach, Cheyne, Driver and Orelli) consider that the Servant of Jehovah is the speaker here. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The speaker: probably the prophet himself:*—The speaker is not introduced by name. Therefore he may be the prophet himself, or he may be the Servant. The present expositor, while feeling that the evidence is not conclusive against either of these . . . inclines to think that there is, on the whole, less objection to its being the prophet who speaks than to its being the Servant. But it is not a very important question which is intended, for the Servant was representative of prophecy; and if it be the prophet who speaks here, he also speaks with the conscience of the whole function and aim of the prophetic order. That Jesus Christ fulfilled this programme does not decide the question one way or the other; for a prophet so representative was as much the antetype and foreshadowing of Christ as the Servant Himself was. On the whole, then, we must be content to feel about this passage, what we must have already felt about many others in our prophecy, that the writer is more anxious to place before us the whole range and ideal of the prophetic gift than to make clear in whom this ideal is realized; and for the rest Jesus of Nazareth so plainly fulfilled it, that it becomes, indeed, a very minor question to ask whom the writer may have intended as its first application. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) The lofty mission and its great results are not too lofty or great for our prophet, for Jeremiah received his office in terms as large. That the prophet has not yet spoken at such length in his own person is no reason why

he should not do so now, especially as this is an occasion on which he sums up and enforces the whole range of prophecy. (*Ibid.*) *The Spirit in the Son of man:*—The fact that Christ's earthly life became effectual through the ministry of the Holy Spirit within Him, and not alone through the inherent virtue and power He brought with Him from His pre-existent state, has become one of the commonplaces of theology; and yet how little do we realize its true import, and cultivate that humility and dependence of soul which would distinguish us if the great truth were ever in view! In spite of our formal adhesion to this doctrine, it seems still strange to us that one whom we think of as holy and Divine should be indebted at every stage of His earthly life to that inward mystic ministry which is so necessary to us because of our sinfulness. We speak of the Holy Ghost as a Deliverer from inbred corruption, and are ready to assume, quite unwarrantably, that where there is no corruption in the nature, the stimulating forces and fervours of His benign indwelling are needless. We are accustomed to look upon this ministry, which perpetuates in our souls the saving work of the Lord Jesus, as though it were a special antidote to human depravity only. For the Spirit to abide moment by moment with Jesus Christ, and work in His humanity, seems like painting the lily, gilding fine gold, and bleaching the untrampled snow. But that is a mistaken view. When the universal Church shall have been built up and consecrated to its high uses, it will be "by the Spirit" that God will dwell in the temple. And the temple of Christ's sacred flesh needed this same indwelling presence. The great Sanctifier blends the essential forces of His personality into this Divinest type of goodness, to show that goodness in even the only begotten Son is not self-originated. In the less mature stages of Christ's expanding humanity implicit and docile dependence on this inward leading was the test of His entire acceptability to the Father. (*T. G. Selby.*) *The Spirit a compensation for the self-emptying of Jesus:*—The Spirit seems to have been given to compensate for that renunciation of power involved in the mystery of the incarnation, and as an earnest of its coming restitution. The wonderful works accomplished by the Son of Man took their rise, not so much in the superhuman qualities of His personality as in the power of that Spirit with which He was anointed. Although there is no clearly developed doctrine of the Spirit in the older portions of the Old Testament writings, Isaiah at least in his day was made to see that the Messianic works of healing and deliverance and redemption would flow out of that anointing by the Spirit which would single out the elect Servant of the Lord from His fellows. And Peter enforces the same thought in the household of Cornelius, declaring how that "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." His own experiences in the Pentecost had taught Peter the secret of his Master's power. Perhaps the discovery had come to him through his own recent mastery over the pride and boastfulness of his nature, and may have helped to confirm him in his new habits of childlike trust upon another. In the days of his self-sufficiency it would have been quite impossible for Peter to believe that He who had been supernaturally revealed as the very Son of God, and glorified by a strange transfiguration splendour that seemed to make Him the fellow of the Most High, should need to achieve His mighty works by leaning upon another. Could Peter have been told that his Master's marvellous gifts were held upon this tenure, he might have looked upon it as an affront to the Divine dignity of his hero, and have exclaimed, as about the death of shame, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." Sometimes Christ's miracles are quoted as proofs of His Divine nature. They are certainly proofs of His Divine authority, but they illustrate the energies of this attending Spirit rather than the attributes of Christ's own proper personality. Christ cast out devils and opened prison doors and raised the dead, but it was by the power of the Holy Ghost alone. The tempter once tried to induce Him to work in His own strength, in the power of His inherent Godhead, so that He might undo and reverse the self-renouncing humility of His own incarnation, but in vain. All He did was in loyalty to this inward Guide who made known to Him the will of the Father and gave Him power for His appointed tasks. Fools that we are, we attempt much in our own strength, but the Son in His humiliation received back His infinite forces of life and dominion only through this Divine messenger from the Father. (*Ibid.*) *A faithful Gospel ministry:*—I. THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL MINISTRY. So it was in Christ's ministry. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF ALL FAITHFUL PREACHING. 1. A faithful minister preaches good tidings to all distressed consciences. 2. A faithful pastor comforts mourners in Zion. 3. A faithful watchman preaches a free Saviour to all the world. (*R. M. McCheyne.*) *A*

true ministry:—I. THE TRUE MINISTRY IS ALWAYS INSPIRED AND DIRECTED BY THE HOLY GHOST. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." II. THE TRUE MINISTRY IS ANIMATED BY THE SUBLIMEST BENEVOLENCE. If you read the statement given by the prophet, you will find throughout a tone of kindliness, benevolence, sympathy, gentleness, pity, for all human sorrow. Therein may be known the true ministry of the Gospel. III. THE TRUE MINISTRY, WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, NEVER SHRINKS FROM ITS MORE AWFUL FUNCTIONS. Observe this sentence in the midst of the declarations of the text: "To proclaim the day of vengeance of our God." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **To preach good tidings unto the meek.** *Jesus a Preacher of good tidings to the meek*:—I. THE WORK ITSELF IN WHICH THE SON OF GOD WAS EMPLOYED, and to which He was called. "To preach good tidings." II. THE SPECIAL OBJECT OF THIS PART OF THE WORK. "The meek." In the parallel place, it reads "poor," and the one explains the other. By the meek here is meant the poor in spirit, those who, as being convinced by the law, have seen themselves to be poor, that they have nothing in which they could stand before God as righteous, but look on themselves as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. And it is remarkable that our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount begins with good tidings to such persons (Matt. v. 3). Our Lord preached to all who heard Him promiscuously these good tidings, but in effect they were not good to any but to the poor in spirit among them. (*T. Boston.*) *Jesus and the meek*:—I. CONSIDER THIS MEEKNESS AND POVERTY, AND SHOW WHO ARE THESE MEEK POOR ONES. This meekness comprehends in it—1. A pressing sense of utter emptiness in one's self (Rom. vii. 18). 2. A pressing sense of sinfulness. 3. A pressing sense of misery by sin. Like the prodigal, they see themselves ready to perish with hunger. Debt is a heavy burden to an honest heart, and filthiness to one that desires to be clean. Their poverty presses them down. 4. A sense of utter inability to help one's self. They find the sting in their conscience, but cannot draw it out; guilt is a burden, but they cannot throw it off; lusts are strong and uneasy, but they are not able to master them; and this presses them sore. 5. A sense of the absolute need of a Saviour, and of help from heaven. 6. A sense as to utter unworthiness of the Lord's help; they see nothing which they have to recommend them to the Lord's help. 7. An earnest desire as to the supply of soul-wants (Matt. v. 6). 8. A hearty contentment in submitting to any method of help which the Lord prescribes. II. EXPLAIN THE GOOD TIDINGS OF THE GOSPEL, AND SHOW THAT THEY ARE GOOD AND WELCOME TIDINGS TO SUCH PERSONS. 1. Gospel tidings are tidings of a complete salvation. 2. These tidings relate to a redemption, to a ransom paid (Gal. iii. 13). 3. To an indemnity, a pardon to criminals who will come to Jesus (Acts xiii. 38, 39). 4. To a glorious Physician of souls, who never fails to cure His patients. 5. These tidings are the tidings of a feast (Isa. xxv. 6, lv. 2; Ps. xxii. 26). 6. These tidings relate to a treasure (2 Cor. iv. 7). 7. To a marriage, a most happy match for poor sinners (Hos. ii. 19, 20). 8. To a glorious victory (Isa. xxv. 8; Rev. iii. 21). 9. To a most desirable peace (Eph. ii. 14). III. SHOW HOW THIS GREAT WORK OF PREACHING IS, AND HATH BEEN, PERFORMED BY CHRIST. 1. He performed this work under the Old Testament dispensation, (1) Personally, by Himself in paradise (Gen. iii. 15). (2) By His ambassador, in His name, the prophets, and ordinary teachers. (3) By His written Word. 2. He preached, and preaches, under the New Testament dispensation. (1) By His own personal preaching in the days of His flesh, when He went about among the Jews, preaching to them as the Minister of the circumcision (Rom. xv. 8). (2) By inspiring His apostles to preach and write the doctrines of salvation contained in the New Testament, on whom He poured out His Spirit, and by their writings, they being dead, yet speak to us from Him and by Him. (3) By raising up and continuing always a Gospel ministry in the Church (Eph. iv. 11–13; Matt. xxviii. 20). (*Ibid.*) **To bind up the broken-hearted.**—*Jesus binds up the broken-hearted*:—I. INQUIRE WHAT IS THAT BROKENNESS OF HEART WHICH IS HERE MEANT. The broken-heartedness is of two kinds. 1. Natural, arising from natural and carnal causes merely, which worketh death (2 Cor. vii. 10). Many who are very whole-hearted in respect of sin, complain that their hearts and spirits are broken by their crosses, afflictions, and ill-usage which they meet with in the world. Thus Ahab, Haman, and Nabal, their hearts were broken with their respective crosses. 2. Religious, which arises from religious causes, namely, sin and its consequences. There is a twofold religious breaking of heart. (1) A mere legal one (Jer. xxiii. 29). When the heart is broken by the mere force of the law, it is broken as a rock in pieces by a hammer, each part remaining hard and rocky still. This breaks the heart for sin, but not from it. (2)

An evangelical one, when not only the law does its part, but the Gospel also breaks the sinner's heart (Zech. xii. 10). II. INQUIRE WHAT IT IS IN AND ABOUT SIN WHICH BREAKS THE MAN'S HEART, WHO IS THUS EVANGELICALLY BROKEN-HEARTED. There is—1. The guilt of sin, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God. 2. The domineering power of sin, or its tyranny, by which he is led captive to it. 3. The contrariety which is in sin to the holy nature and law of God. 4. The indwelling of sin, and its cleaving so close to a person that he cannot shake it off (Rom. vii. 24). 5. Sin's mixing itself with all he does, even with his best duties (Rom. vii. 21). 6. Frequent backslidings (Jer. xxxi. 18). 7. Desertions, hiding of the Lord's face, and interruptions of the soul's communion with God (Isa. liv. 6; Lam. iii. 18, 44). 8. A Christian's sinfulness, with the bitter fruits springing from his sin (Rom. vii. 19). III. SHOW WHAT SORT OF A HEART A BROKEN HEART IS. 1. It is a contrite or bruised heart (Ps. li. 17). Not only broken in pieces like a rock, but broken to powder, and so fit to receive any impression. The heart is now kindly broken and bruised betwixt the upper and nether mill-stones; the upper mill-stone of the law, a sense of God's wrath against sin; and the nether mill-stone of the Gospel, of Divine love, mercy, and favour, manifested in word and providences. 2. An aching heart (Acts ii. 37). 3. A shameful heart (Ezra ix. 6; Ps. xl. 12). 4. A tender heart (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). 5. A rent heart (Joel ii. 13). 6. A pliable heart. 7. A humble heart (Isa. lvii. 15). IV. SHOW HOW THE LORD CHRIST BINDS UP AND HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED. The great Physician uses two sorts of bands for a broken heart: He binds them up with inner and with outward bands. 1. With inner bands, which go nearest the sore, the pained broken heart. And these are two. (1) The Spirit of adoption. (2) Faith in Christ (the band of the covenant), which He works in the heart by His Spirit. Faith is a healing band, for it knits the soul. 2. Outward bands. There are also two. (1) His own word, especially the promises of the Gospel. (2) His own seals of the covenant (Acts ii. 38). (*T. Boston.*) *Jesus and the broken-hearted:*—I. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF BROKEN HEARTS—THE NATURAL AND THE SPIRITUAL. They may be united. Often they are divided. Every broken heart becomes the subject of Jesus' care, and is dear to Him, if for no other reason in the world but for this—because it is unhappy. II. CHRIST WAS HIMSELF WELL TRAINED IN THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING HEARTS, THAT HE MIGHT LEARN TO BIND THE MOURNERS. All which goes to break men's hearts He felt. No wonder, then, that the bindings are what they are. 1. Delicate. 2. Very wise. 3. Sure and thorough. There is no such thing as a half-cure in that treatment. No heart which has not known a breaking knows, indeed, what strength is. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *A broken heart:*—Many things are valuable when whole, which, being broken, are little worth; but it is otherwise with the human heart. (*R. Macculloch.*) **To proclaim liberty to the captives.**—*Jesus proclaims liberty to the captives:*—I. MEN'S NATURAL STATE. A state of captivity. They are captives to Satan (2 Tim. ii. 26). II. CHRIST'S WORK WITH RESPECT TO THEM. To proclaim liberty to them. (*T. Boston.*) *Liberty for Satan's captives:*—I. SINNERS IN THEIR UNREGENERATE STATE ARE SATAN'S CAPTIVES. II. JESUS CHRIST, WITH THE EXPRESS CONSENT OF HIS FATHER, HAS ISSUED HIS ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF LIBERTY TO SATAN'S CAPTIVES. (*Ibid.*) *The sinner's captivity:*—The properties of it. It is—1. A spiritual captivity, a captivity of the soul. 2. Universal. It extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul, the inner man. 3. A hard and sore captivity. 4. A perpetual captivity. This conqueror will never quit his captives, unless they be taken from him by Almighty power. 5. A voluntary captivity, and thus the more hopeless. Though they were taken in war, and born captives, yet now he is their master by their own consent and choice, while they choose to serve the devil, and cannot be brought to give themselves to the Lord. It is a bewitching captivity. (*Ibid.*) *The Gospel proclamation:*—1. It is a jubilee proclamation (Lev. xxv. 10). 2. It is a conqueror's proclamation to captives. Satan warred against mankind, he carried them all captive into his own kingdom; and there was none to deliver out of his hand. But King Jesus had engaged him, routed all his forces, overturned his kingdom, and taken the kingdom to Himself (Col. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 8). And now being settled on His throne, His royal proclamation is issued, that Satan's captives may again return into the kingdom of God. (*Ibid.*) *Liberty to the captive:*—Our Lord Himself directs us to consider Him as speaking in these words. **I. THE DEPLORABLE OBJECTS HE REGARDS.** Captives. This slavery—1. So universal as to our species. 2. Dreadful in its operations upon the individual. 3. Voluntary, and submitted to as though it were a blessing rather than a curse.

4. Diversified as to the degree of its influence and the manner of its operations. 5. Cruel in its present effects and inconceivably more wretched in its final results. Men are guilty as well as enslaved. II. THE GRACIOUS DESIGN OF THE OFFICE WHICH HE SUSTAINS. To effect deliverance for the captives. To this He is consecrated by the Spirit of the Lord. 1. By Him the claims of justice are perfectly satisfied. 2. Christ dissolves or breaks the power which leads us captive. 3. He induces the captive to accept deliverance when it is offered to him. 4. He renders their deliverance permanent, and prevents them from being again entangled in the yoke of bondage. III. THE CORRESPONDING MANNER IN WHICH HIS GRACIOUS DESIGN IS TO BE MADE KNOWN. By proclamation. 1. It indicates that His office and its design are to be made universally known. 2. It is intended to excite universal attention—to create the most deep and lively interest. It is a proclamation which at once demands and deserves attention. 3. It shows that deliverance is to be effected in a way perfectly consistent with the freedom of human agency. 4. It is in such a way as to secure the glory of their deliverance to Him who thus proclaims it. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Jesus the Liberator*:—It is a blessed name of Jesus, and as true as it is blessed—the Liberator. We can scarcely conceive anything grander, or more delightful, than to be always going about making everything free. To this end, Christ first liberated Himself. 1. As in Him there was no sin, He never indeed could know the worst of all bondage—the bondage of the spirit to the flesh. But He did know the restraints of fear; He did feel the harassing of indecision; He did experience the irksomeness of the sense of a body too narrow for the largeness of His soul; and He did go through the contractions of all that is material, and the mortifying conventionalities of life—for He was hungry, thirsty, weary, sad, and the sport of fools. From all this Christ freed Himself—distinctly, progressively, He freed Himself. Step by step, He led captivity captive. He made for Himself a spiritual body which, in its own nature, and by the law of its being, soared at once beyond the trammels of humanity. Therefore He is the Liberator, because He was once Himself the Prisoner. 2. And all Christ did, and all Christ was, upon this earth—His whole mission—was essentially either to teach or to give liberty. His preaching was, for the most part, to change the constraint of law into the largeness of love. Every word He said, in private or in public, proved expansion. 3. When Christ burst through all the tombs—the moral tombs and the physical tombs in which we all lay buried—and when He went out into life and glory, He was not Himself alone—He was at that moment the covenanted Head of a mystical body, and all that body rose with Him. If so be you have union with Christ, you are risen; bondage is past; you are free. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **The opening of the prison to them that are bound.**—*Sinners worse than captives*:—1. They are also prisoners. Every captive is not a prisoner, but all natural men, being Satan's captives, are held prisoners. 2. They are prisoners in chains, bound in the prison. 3. They are blinded too in their prison (compare Luke iv. 18). It was a custom much used in the Eastern nations to put out the eyes of some of their prisoners, adding this misery to their imprisonment. So the Philistines did with Samson (Judges xvi. 21); and Nebuchadnezzar with Zedekiah (2 Kings xxv. 7). This, in a spiritual sense, is the case of all prisoners in their natural state. (*T. Boston.*) *Causes of sinners' imprisonment*:—1. As debtors to Divine justice. 2. As malefactors condemned in law (John iii. 18). (*Ibid.*) *Satan's bands*:—1. The band of prejudices. 2. Of ill company. 3. Of earthly-mindedness. 4. Of unbelief. 5. Of slothfulness. 6. Of delays (Acts. xxiv. 25). 7. Of delusion (Isa. xliv. 20; Rev. iii. 17). 8. Of divers lusts (2 Tim. iii. 6). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. **To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.**—*The year of Jubilee*:—It may be profitable to trace out the analogies between the year of jubilee which rejoiced the hearts of Israel, and that more comprehensive era of which it was broadly typical, and which was to bring gladness to all peoples unto the end of the dispensation, when the loving ministry of God is finished. 1. The Jewish jubilee commenced at the close of the day of atonement. Is not this a very true type of the way in which spiritual blessings are exclusively introduced to mankind? There can be no jubilee for us, a race of lost and guilty rebels taken in arms, traitors convicted of treason, unless an all-prevalent atonement had previously purchased our pardon. 2. There was rest from exhausting labour. By a providential arrangement similar to that which secured a double supply of manna on the sixth day, the land had unusual fertility in the sixth year, so that in the seventh, which was the ordinary, and in the fiftieth, which was the special sabbatical year, there was a suspension of the common duties of husbandry. Both the land and labourers had rest, and yet

the supply did not fail, for there was plenty in every barn, and there was gladness in every heart. And, in a spiritual sense, is not rest for the weary just what our spirits so fervently require—just what the Gospel has been itself inspired to provide? 3. The next blessing pertaining to the year of jubilee was the restoration of alienated property. When a man, through misfortune or extravagance, had contracted liabilities that were beyond his means, and had sold his possessions to discharge them, if he were not himself able to redeem them, and if none of his kindred were at once wealthy and willing, these possessions remained as the property of the creditor until the year of jubilee, and then it was provided by the law that they should return to him who had parted from them for a season. We, the whole race of us, had a bright inheritance once—God's favour, God's fellowship, God's image, all were ours by birth—but, alas! we alienated it by sin. We are not ourselves able to redeem it. But, through infinite compassion, this our inheritance has not been suffered to pass out of the family. Christ our kinsman, our elder brother, has paid down the price, and has rescued this our heritage from the fangs of the harpies who would fain have usurped it for their own. We had sold our birthright as a common thing, but it has been redeemed, and it is offered to us without a price by a love that is surely without parallel. The acceptable year did dawn upon the world indeed when it witnessed the birth of the Messiah, and that sun, like that of Gideon, stood still at His bidding, and hasted not to go down until now. 4. Another blessing which is mentioned in the history is the restoration of freedom. It seems to have been a custom among the Hebrews, as among other Eastern nations, for a debtor who had become hopelessly involved to sell himself to his creditors, in order that by his personal service he might discharge the debt that he was otherwise unable to pay. Of course, it was provided that for the amelioration of his condition, and for its termination in the year of jubilee, the man was not to be a slave, but a hired servant and a soldier, and he was to remain until the year of jubilee, and then he and his children should all go out and return unto their possession. All sinners are in bondage, bound with the chain of their sins, led captive by the devil at his will. How I delight to proclaim it in your hearing, "The year of jubilee is come." "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (*W. M. Punshon.*) *No light without a shadow:*—There is a tremendous alternative before men—acceptation or vengeance. When we speak of vengeance in this connection, and as a Divine act, it must be understood not in a malignant and revengeful sense, but in a judicial. It must be regarded as an act of eternal justice. We propose to interrogate Nature and ask her what she has to tell us of this alternative. We would greatly prefer to present Christ as the light of the world, but we know of no light without a shadow. Observe, however, the terms in which the light and the shadow are expressed in the prophet's language. It is the "year" of acceptation, and only the "day" of vengeance. This is a very natural description. The light always attracts us most: we scarcely think of the shadow. The idea of hell is in accordance with the laws of nature, and cannot be eliminated from thought. I. ANTITHESES BELONG TO THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF THINGS; HENCE, ARE TO BE FOUND EVEN IN FINALITIES. All positive things involve a corresponding negative; and are comprehensible only by contrast with their negative. If you paint a picture all white, you have nothing but a white-washed canvas and no picture; it is only by contrast between lights and shadows that you can give it expression and form. What is there in the world that has not its corresponding negative? If there is light there is also darkness; if there is height there is also depth; if there is joy there is also sorrow; if there is perfection there is also deformity; if there is beauty there is also ugliness; if there is upward there is also downward; if there is heat there is also cold; if there is good there is also bad; if there is reward there is also punishment; if there is heaven there is also hell. II. ALTERNATIVES ARE NECESSARY TO MORAL BEINGS. A moral being is one who has power of choice; and there can be no choice except as between alternatives. Our whole life is a choosing between alternatives. It would then, indeed, be singular if this choice was only possible in matters of secondary importance, but eliminated from matters of the highest importance. If there is no alternative over against heaven, then heaven is not a matter of choice; if not a matter of choice, then it must be arbitrarily conferred, and, there being no alternative, it must of necessity be conferred arbitrarily upon good and bad alike. III. THE LAW OF CONSEQUENCES REVEALS A HELL. Who can compute the consequences of an act? It may be but momentary, yet consequences of the most momentous character are entailed upon the world. IV. THE LAW OF GROWTH REVEALS A HELL.

Growth is of two kinds: by assimilation of things without, and by development from within: the first, scientific people call by involution; the second, by evolution. Sin grows, and grows by this double process. It assimilates with itself the elements of evil around it. This is the law of its existence, which forecloses any prospect of remedy from within. Moreover, sin grows by evolution. Sin propagates, and it propagates nothing but itself. Hence it cannot become extinct. It must propagate itself in the soul for ever unless some external power shall eliminate it. It cannot outgrow itself. The soul, therefore, which is identified with sin, must partake of this eternal process. That there is an external remedy we will confess: but we can readily perceive that the growing processes of sin must more and more repel this remedy. The history of a sinning soul, then, unfolds an ever-diminishing hope of reclamation. V. THE EVIDENT TENDENCY OF CHARACTER TO ASSUME STABILITY IS INDICATIVE OF A HELL. This final stability is what we call second nature—the outcome and ultimate form of the plastic powers of the soul. Hence the welfare of the creature demands a limited probation. Man's happiness demands that he should be able to work towards an assured future: but the laws which facilitate stability in goodness must also facilitate stability in evil. Hence it will be seen why it is that the ambassadors of God are for ever proclaiming: "Now is the day of salvation," and warning you to "seek the Lord while He may be found." Hence it is we are telling you that the fittest time for giving yourselves to God is in your youth. VI. CONCLUSION. Nature has told us there is a hell. Thus nature is a school-master to bring us to Christ. (*Southern Pulpit.*) *Proclamation of acceptance and vengeance:*—Notice well the expression, "to proclaim," because a proclamation is the message of a king, and where the word of a king is there is power. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to announce the will of the King of kings. Nor let it be forgotten that a proclamation must be treated with profound respect, not merely by receiving attention to its contents, but by gaining obedience to its demands. There are three points in the proclamation worthy of our best attention. I. JESUS PROCLAIMS THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD. There can be very little question that this relates to the jubilee year. The reason for all the jubilee blessings was found in the Lord. II. THE DAY OF VENGEANCE OF OUR GOD. 1. Whenever there is a day of mercy to those who believe, it is always a day of responsibility to those who reject it, and if they continue in that state it is a day of increased wrath to unbelievers. 2. Another meaning of the text comes out in the fact that there is appointed a day of vengeance for all the enemies of Christ, and this will happen in that bright future day for which we are looking. 3. However, I consider that the chief meaning of the text lies in this—that "the day of vengeance of our God" was that day when He made all the trangressions of His people to meet upon the head of our great Surety. Look at the instructive type by which this truth was taught to Israel of old. The year of jubilee began with the day of atonement. 4. The day of vengeance, then, is intimately connected with the year of acceptance; and mark, they must be so connected experimentally in the heart of all God's people by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, for whenever Christ comes to make us live, the law comes first to kill us. III THE COMFORT FOR MOURNERS DERIVABLE FROM BOTH THESE THINGS. "To comfort all that mourn." Oh, ye mourners, what joy is here, joy because this is the year of acceptance, and in the year of acceptance, or jubilee, men were set free and their lands were restored without money. No man ever paid a penny of redemption money on the jubilee morning: every man was free simply because jubilee was proclaimed: no merit was demanded, no demur was offered, no delay allowed, no dispute permitted. Jubilee came, and the bondman was free. And now, to-day, whosoever believeth in Jesus is saved, pardoned, freed, without money, without merit, without preparation, simply because he believeth. An equal joy-note rings out from the other sentence concerning the day of vengeance. If the day of vengeance took place when our Lord died, then it is over. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Preaching God's judgment on sin:*—A member of the congregation, at the close of a sermon that lasted for an hour, and had been preached amid a stillness most painful, nothing heard but the tones of the preacher, and during the pauses the ticking of the clock—a sermon on the sad and awful issues of a sinful life, and the glory and the joy of a life lived in Christ—said, "If Dr. Dale intends to preach like that I shall not come and hear him, for I cannot stand it; it goes through me." I spoke to Dr. Dale afterwards about the stillness and said it was simply awful. "Ah! yes," he said; "but it was more awful to me; it is hard to preach like that, but it must be done." (*Geo. Barber, in Dr. Dale's Life.*) **To comfort all that mourn.**—*Tears dried:*—Some seek to comfort by telling us that sorrow is wrong. They say that we should be brave and not

allow our feelings to become so deep. It is true there may be excessive grief, and so grief may become sinful. But to say that we must not sorrow is to try to induce us to outrage our nature and to deprive us of one of the most effectual means whereby God educates and purifies. Christ is not come to deliver us from suffering, but to enable us to derive good from the suffering. How does Christ "comfort all that mourn"? I. By Himself becoming the sufferer for us, to take away sin. Christ bore the curse of it for us, and in doing this He removed the root of our mourning. II. By His sympathy. He feels with us and for us, and by oneness with us in sorrow gives us comfort. Sympathy means suffering along with another. Job spoke of it when he said, "Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?" III. By showing us the origin and purpose of suffering. Nowhere except in God's revelation in Christ do we learn how and why affliction and sorrow come upon us. Our Lord Jesus Christ explains all. And His explanation goes down to the very root of the matter. Suffering is necessary in order that we enter into the fulness of God's love in the gift of His Son. He who has received Christ as his Saviour is instructed, sanctified, made more meet for the Master's use, becomes more heavenly minded, by means of all the affliction through which his Heavenly Father causes him to pass. To suffer in Christ is to live more deeply. "Love and sorrow are the two conditions of a profound life." IV. By assuring those who believe that they shall be everlastingly with Him to behold His glory. We learn—1. That the comfort Christ imparts is effectual. It is not limited or partial. See how fully this is set forth in the passage with which the text is connected. What variety of imagery is used to picture to us the fulness and perfection of the remedy Christ brings for human guilt and misery. The healing He effects is for our whole nature, for heart, mind and conscience. He completely redeems and blesses. 2. The comfort Christ gives is enduring. It is no momentary or temporary assuaging of grief. It will never fail, it will increase in its influence and power. 3. The comfort Christ bestows is offered to all and is adapted to all. "To comfort all that mourn." "All ye that labour," etc. Whatever burden, whatever sorrow, there is in Him comfort for all. (*G. W. Humphreys, B.A.*)

Ver. 3. **To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.**—*Mourners in Zion*, may mean either those that mourn for Zion (chap. lxvi. 10) or those that mourn in her. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Mourners in Zion:*—I. The character of those persons who have a present interest in the mediation of Christ. Such as "mourn in Zion." They differ from others—1. In respect of the spring or principle of their mourning. They mourn, as others do, in a natural way, for what is contrary to their natures and is considered hurtful to them. But they likewise mourn for what is most agreeable to their nature, in its present corrupt state. The corruption of their nature is itself a principal cause of their mourning, and therefore can proceed from no principle inherent in corrupt nature. It is the fruit of "the Spirit of grace and of supplication." 2. In respect of the object for whom they mourn. Self is always the reigning principle with unrenewed men. The inhabitant of Zion mourns also for himself, and while actuated by a principle of self-preservation it must be so. But he mourns also—(1) For his brethren; for every fellow-creature whom he sees in misery; even for his enemies if any evil befall them. (2) For Zion, for the Church of God. (3) For Christ. They have a believing view of their own sin as laid upon Christ; therefore they consider every sin they have committed as a mortal wound given to Him. 3. In respect of the subject of their grief, or the thing for which they mourn. (1) For sin as well as for suffering. (2) For the filthiness as well as the guilt of sin. (3) For the sin of their nature as well as of their life. (4) For sins against Christ and the Gospel, as well as against God and the law. (5) For the sins of others as well as for their own. 4. In respect of the fruits and effects of their sorrow (2 Cor. vii. 10, 11). (1) Whereas the sorrow of the world excites men to take methods of their own devising to still the clamours of conscience, the mourning here intended leads to that remedy which God Himself hath provided. (2) Whereas the sorrow of the world worketh death, crucifies the false hopes the man had entertained of safety in the way of sin, and, when rising to excess, tends to drive him to despair, the Christian mourning is a happy means of his being begotten again to a lively hope. (3) The sorrow of the world inflames the person's enmity against God, but the Christian's mourning stirs him up to embrace the offers of reconciliation with God. Being accompanied with hatred of sin, it serves to increase his love to God, His holy law and His service. (4) In a word, that sorrow for sin that may be found in an unrenewed man leaves him as it found him. Godly sorrow,

on the contrary, worketh "repentance, not to be repented of." The person convinced of the evil and folly of sin, and encouraged by a heart-affecting view of the mercy of God in Christ, turns from sin with loathing of it, turns to God with full purpose of heart, and from that time forth persists in a constant endeavour to walk with Him in all the ways of new obedience. II. THE CONDITION THAT THESE PERSONS ARE IN, FOR THE MOST PART, YET IN THIS WORLD. They are covered with "ashes"; employed in "mourning"; and under the prevailing influence of "the spirit of heaviness." 1. They are subject to all the ordinary miseries of this life, in common with other men. 2. They are affected to a great depth of sorrow by many things which are no affliction to the rest of mankind. They are affected with spiritual as well as temporal evils; sin, the hiding of God's face, the low state of the Church, the divisions among Church members, spiritual judgments, etc. 3. They are subject to many causes of mourning that either fall not upon others or befall them only in a small degree. They live in a foreign land while others consider themselves as at home. They run, and agonize, and strain themselves, in the race that is set before them, while others sit still and are at ease. 4. They are often subject to groundless discouragements through the prevalence of temptation and unbelief. III. THE HAPPY CONDITION TO WHICH THESE MOURNERS SHALL BE BROUGHT. "Beauty for ashes," etc. 1. Even while the causes of their mourning continue, they are supported, encouraged, and comforted in such a manner as to afford them a happiness superior to what others enjoy in their best times. 2. They shall be completely, though gradually, delivered from all their mourning, and from all the causes of it. 3. They shall, at length, enjoy all that positive happiness which their natures are capable of. 4. They shall, at last, be fully sensible of all the happiness of their condition, and shall express their sense of it in songs of eternal praise. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST WILL BRING ABOUT THIS HAPPY CHANGE. 1. He is commissioned to appoint these things for them. The word signifies to ordain by a judicial sentence. Christ, as King in Zion, is invested with the highest authority: God has committed to Him all judgment. 2. He is sent to give unto them what He has thus appointed for them. (*J. Young.*) **Beauty for ashes.**—"*Beauty*":—"A crest," any insignia or ornament for the head. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Beauty for ashes*:—1. The well-known fable of the Phœnix is one that has been often truthfully enacted on our earth. Successive platforms of creation, with all their varied life and loveliness, have been reduced to ruin, and out of the wreck new life and beauty have emerged. The earth has reached its present perfection of form through repeated geological fires. The fair Eden, in the midst of which the history of the human race begins, was developed from the ashes of previous less lovely Edens. The soil of the earth is composed of the ashes of substances that have been oxidized, burned by the slow, soft caresses of the very air that breathed upon them—and whose gentle smile gave them colour and form. The building of the world was a process of burning, and its foundations were undoubtedly laid in flames. Its crust was originally like a burnt cinder. The rocks and the earths, the sands and the clays, the very seas themselves are, as it were, the ashes of a long-continued and universal conflagration. But during the long geological periods, by the silent agency of vegetable life working in unison with the sunshine, the work of the fire has been partially undone, and a considerable amount of combustible matter has been slowly rescued from the wreck of the first conflagration. Whatever now exists on the earth unburnt is owing to the wonderful co-operation of plant life and solar light. These two forces have given to us all the beauty which now spreads over the ashes of the world. Nay, the very ashes of the earth themselves contribute in the most marvellous manner to its beauty. How much does the scenery of our world owe to its picturesque rocks, and sandy deserts, and lonely seas, which, as we have seen, are but the ashes of the primeval fire! What wonderful beauty God has brought out of water! It is strange to think of water being the ashes of a conflagration—the snow on the mountain-top, the foam of the waterfall, the cloud of glory in the heavens, the dewdrop in the eye of the daisy. Without the intervention of vegetable life at all, God has thus directly, from the objects themselves, given beauty for ashes. He might have made these ashes of our globe as repulsive to the sight as the blackened relics of forest and plain, over which the prairie fire has swept, while, at the same time, they might have subserved all their ends and uses. But He has, instead, clothed them with incomparable majesty and loveliness, so that they minister most richly to our admiration and enjoyment; and some of the noblest conceptions of the human mind have been borrowed from their varied chambers of imagery. 2. Like the old processes of nature are the new ones that take place still. Out of the ashes of the local conflagration

that has reduced the fields and forests to one uniform blackened waste comes forth the beauty of greener fields and forests of species unknown there before. Very strikingly is this seen on the dry hill-sides of the Sierra Nevada, covered with dense scrub which is often swept by fire. All the trees in the groves of pine that grow on these hill-sides, however unequal in size, are of the same age, and the cones which they produce are persistent, and never discharge their seeds until the tree or the branch to which they belong dies. Consequently, when one of the groves is destroyed by fire, the burning of the trees causes the scales of the cones to open, and the seed which they contain is scattered profusely upon the ground; and on the bare, blackened site of the old grove a young, green plantation of similar pines springs forth. This curious adaptation explains the remarkable circumstance that all the trees of the grove are of the same age. In an equally remarkable way the fires in the Australian bush, which are so destructive to the forests of that country, are made the very means of reproducing the vegetation. 3. Another illustration of the principle may be derived from volcanic regions. No scenes of earth are lovelier than those which are subjected to the frequent destructive action of volcanoes. The Bay of Naples is confessedly one of those spots in which scenic beauty has culminated. And yet this second Eden is the creation of volcanic fires. No soil is so fertile as crumbling lava and volcanic ashes. The destroyer of the fields and gardens is thus the renovator. The ashes of the burning that has devastated homestead and vineyard reappear in the delicate clusters of the grape, and the vivid verdure of the vine-leaves which embower a new home of happiness on the site. 4. And—a case of extremes meeting—frost has the same effect as fire. No meadows are greener, no corn-fields more luxuriant, than those which spread over the soil that has been formed by the attrition of ancient glaciers. The cedars of Lebanon grow on the moraines left behind by ice-streams that had sculptured the mountains into their present shape; and over the ranges of the Sierra Nevada, the coniferous forests, the noblest and most beautiful on earth, are spread in long, curving bands, braided together into lace-like patterns of charming variety—an arrangement determined by the course of ancient glaciers, upon whose moraines all the forests of the Nevada are growing, and whose varied distribution over curves and ridges and high rolling plateaus, the trees have faithfully followed. Elsewhere throughout the world pine-woods usually grow, not on soil produced by the slow weathering of the atmosphere, but by the direct mechanical action of glaciers, which crushed and ground it from the solid rocks of mountain ranges, and in their slow recession at the end of the glacial period, left it spread out in beds available for tree-growth. 5. Is there not beauty for ashes, when the starchy matter which gives the grey colour to the lichen is changed by the winter rains into chlorophyl, and the dry, lifeless, parchment-like substance becomes a bright green pliable rosette, as remarkable for the elegance of its form as for the vividness of its colour? Does not the corn of wheat, when God, as Ezekiel strikingly says, "calls" for it and increases it, develop out of the grey ashes that wrap round and preserve the embers of its life, the long spears of bright verdure which pierce through the dark wintry soil up to the sunshine and the blue air of heaven? All the beauty of the green fields and woods, springing from the root, or the seed, or the weed, is produced from the ashes of previous vegetation. Some plants are found only where something has been burnt. Farmers say that wood ashes will cause the dormant white clover to spring up; and fields treated in this manner will suddenly be transfigured with the fragrant bloom. A lovely little moss, whose seed-vessels, by the twisting and untwisting of their stems, indicate the changes of the weather like a barometer, grows on moors and in woods in spots where fires have been; and it covers with its bright green verdure the sites of buildings, marking with its soft, delicate cushions where the hearthstone had been. From its fondness for growing in such places, it is known in France by the familiar name of *La Charbonnière*. After the great London fire, a species of mustard grew up on every side, covering with its yellow blossoms the charred ruins and the recently exposed soil strewn with ashes; and, as if to show some curious affinity between the conflagration of cities and the mustard tribe, after the more recent burning of Moscow, another species of the same family made its appearance among the ruins, and is still to be met with in the neighbourhood of that city. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Beauty for ashes: Judaism:*—Out of the ashes of the burnt-offering all the beauty of the Hebrew faith emanated. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty for ashes: the atonement:*—How expressive was this type of the atoning death of the Son of God! The Victim in His case too was reduced to ashes. We see as clearly on the cross on which was stretched His lifeless body, that the work of atonement

was finished, and that a complete satisfaction had been made to God for human sin, as the priest saw in the ashes on the altar how entirely the sacrifice had met with the Divine approval and acceptance. As the ashes were laid beside the altar for a while, so the body of Jesus remained upon the cross some time after death, exposed to the idle and mocking gaze of the multitude, but most precious in the sight of Him whose law He had magnified and made honourable by His obedience unto death. As the ashes, further, were placed on the east side of the altar, because from that quarter the bright light of the morning sun arose—a natural symbolism common to nearly all religions, Christians, Mohammedans, and Pagans alike turning to the east in prayer, and laying their dead and building their sacred shrines in that direction—so the Sun of Righteousness rose from that point of the compass, and cast back the light of the glory of the resurrection upon all the incidents and circumstances of His death. The radiance of the rising sun shone on the ashes beside the Jewish altar, making it manifest that the lamb had been entirely consumed; the sun rose upon the morning of the Sabbath after Christ's crucifixion upon a cross from which the slain Lamb of God had been taken away, and upon a sepulchre nigh at hand, wherein had lain the body of Him who was the end of the law for righteousness. And, lastly, as the Jewish priests carried the ashes of the sacrifice without the camp into a clean place, so the body of Jesus was laid outside the city of Jerusalem in a new sepulchre wherein no man had ever before been laid. His grave was in a garden which was close to Golgotha, where He was crucified. Truly God gave great beauty for ashes in that garden sepulchre! (*Ibid.*) *Beauty for ashes: sin and grace:*—To the sinner who repents and believes in this great atoning Sacrifice, God gives beauty for ashes. Sin is an infringement of God's law of order, through which alone all the brightness and variety of life can be evolved. It disintegrates, decomposes, reduces to ashes. Its great characteristic is its wearisome sameness and monotony, a dreary movement without variety from iniquity to iniquity. It is a defacement and destruction passing over the soul and life of man, like an earthquake over a city, overthrowing into one common heap of similar ruins all the fair variety of its architecture; or like a fire through a forest, reducing all the multitudinous life and variety of vegetation to the same uniform dreary level of black cinders and grey ashes, on which no dew falls, and on which the sun itself shines with a ghastly and mocking smile. Out of this melancholy wreck the grace of God constructs the fresh and infinite variety of blessedness which belongs to the converted soul. (*Ibid.*) *Perfect through suffering:*—To the sorrowful God gives beauty for ashes. Sorrow and suffering play a gracious part in the moral economy of the world. They are all the furnace in which our evil nature is reduced to ashes. We are laid with the great Sufferer of our race upon the altar and share the fellowship of His sufferings, and like Him are made perfect through suffering. On the most awful battlefields of life grow the greenest pastures of peace; on the fierce lava streams that have desolated the heart, bloom the sweetest virtues and flourish the peaceable fruits of righteousness. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty for ashes: death and eternal life:*—The ashes of the dead speak of the greatest humiliation, the uttermost loss, highest hopes extinguished, and noblest ideas perished. The gifts and gains of our civilization have made human life more precious than of old; the results of science, showing through what long stages and by what wonderful processes it has reached its present perfection, have greatly exalted the conception of its importance; the revelation of Divine grace has made known to us that, for its sake, the Son of God Himself died, and what unspeakable issues hang upon it; and the experience of every heart that deeply loves, confirms the truth that in this human life love is by far the greatest and most blessed thing, "the most Divine flower that Nature, in the long course of her evolutions, has evoked." And here, in the ashes of the dead, it has all come to an end. Other wastes may be repaired. Every spring, the earth rises in fresh loveliness from the baptism of the autumnal fire. But what shall repair the waste of human death? To the pagan all was hopeless! Even the Hebrew faith itself could scarcely imagine that any conscious beauty could ever come from such ashes; and its helpless cry ascended up to the pitiless heaven, "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead?" And, in our days, cruel science comes and employs all its strength in ruthlessly rolling a great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre. But the Christian religion assures us that for the ashes of our dead we shall yet have immortal beauty. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty for ashes:*—I. WHO GIVES THIS WORD? It comes from Him who said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me;" "He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." Now, in a subordinate sense, Christian ministers have the Spirit of God resting upon them, and they are sent to

bind up the broken-hearted; but they can only do so in the name of Jesus, and in strength given from Him. This word is not spoken by them, nor by prophets or apostles either, but by the great Lord and Master of apostles and prophets, and ministers, even by Jesus Christ Himself. If He declares that He will comfort us, then we may rest assured we shall be comforted! The stars in His right hand may fail to penetrate the darkness, but the rising of the Sun of Righteousness effectually scatters the gloom. If the Consolation of Israel Himself comes forth for the uplifting of His downcast people, then their doubts and fears may well fly apace, since His presence is light and peace. But who is this anointed One who comes to comfort mourners? 1. He is described in the preface to the text as a preacher. Remember what kind of preacher Jesus was. "Never man spake like this Man." He was a son of consolation indeed. It was said of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." 2. In addition to His being a preacher, He is described as a physician. "He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." Some hearts want more than words. The wounds are deep, they are not flesh cuts, but horrible gashes which lay bare the bone, and threaten ere long to kill unless they be skilfully closed. It is, therefore, a great joy to know that the generous Friend who, in the text, promises to deal with the sorrowing, is fully competent to meet the most frightful cases. Jehovah Rophi is the name of Jesus of Nazareth. "By His stripes we are healed." 3. As if this were not enough, our gracious Helper is next described as a liberator. "He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." There were many downcast persons in Israel in the olden times—persons who had become bankrupt, and, therefore, had lost their estates, and had even sunk yet further into debt, till they were obliged to sell their children into slavery, and to become themselves bondsmen. But the fiftieth year came round, and never was there heard music so sweet in all Judea's land as when the silver trumpet was taken down on the jubilee morn, and a loud shrill blast was blown in every city, and hamlet, and village, in all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba. It meant: "Israelite, thou art free. If thou hast sold thyself, go forth without money, for the year of jubilee has come." Jesus has come with a similar message. 4. As if this were not all, one other matter is mentioned concerning our Lord, and He is pictured as being sent as the herald of good tidings of all sorts to us the sons of men. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Behold in the person of the incarnate God the sure pledge of Divine benevolence. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," etc. II. TO WHOM IS THIS WORD SPOKEN? To those who mourn in Zion. They are in Zion; they are the Lord's people, but they mourn. To mourn is not always a mark of grace. Nature mourns. Fallen human nature will have to mourn for ever, except grace shall change it. But the mourning here meant is a mourning of gracious souls. It assumes various shapes. 1. It begins in most hearts with lamentation over past sin. 2. True hearts also sorrow over their present imperfections. 3. The Christian mourner laments, also, because he cannot be more continuously in communion with God. A native of sunny Italy deplores the absence of heaven's bright blue, when made to dwell in this land of the fleecy clouds; and he who has dwelt in unclouded fellowship with the Lord bemoans his hard lot, if even for awhile he beholds not that face which is as the sun shining in its strength. 4. The real Christian mourns, again, because he cannot be more useful. 5. Moreover, like his Lord, he mourns for others. He mourns in Zion because of the deadness of the Christian Church, its divisions, its errors, its carelessness towards the souls of sinners. But he mourns most of all for the unconverted. III. WHAT IS THAT WHICH IS SPOKEN in the text to those that mourn? Come, mourning souls, who mourn in the way described: there is comfort appointed for you, and there is also comfort given to you. It is the prerogative of King Jesus both to appoint and to give. Observe the change Christ promises to work for His mourners. 1. Here is beauty given for ashes. In the Hebrew there is a ring in the words which cannot be conveyed in the English. The ashes that men put upon their head in the East in the time of sorrow made a grim tiara for the brow of the mourner; the Lord promises to put all these ashes away, and to substitute for them a glorious head-dress—a diadem of beauty. Or, if we run away from the words, and take the inner sense, we may look at it thus:—mourning makes the face wan and emaciated, and so takes away the beauty; but Jesus promises that He will so come and reveal joy to the sorrowing soul that the face shall fill up again: the eyes that were dull and cloudy shall sparkle again, and the countenance, yea, and the whole person, shall be once more radiant with the beauty which sorrow

had so grievously marred. 2. Then, it is added, "He will give the oil of joy for mourning." Here we have first beauty, and then unction. The Orientals used rich perfumed oils on their persons—used them largely and lavishly in times of great joy. Now, the Holy Spirit comes upon those who believe in Jesus, and gives them an anointing of perfume, most precious, more sweet and costly than the nard of Araby. "We have an unction from the Holy One." 3. Then, it is added, to give still greater fulness to the cheering promise, that the Lord will give "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The man is first made beautiful, next he has the anointing, then afterwards he is arrayed in robes of splendour. "The garment of praise," what a dress is this! When a man wraps himself about, as it were, with psalmody, and lives for ever a chorister, singing not with equal voice, but with the same earnest heart as they do who day and night keep up the never-ending hymn before the throne of the infinite I AM, what a life is his, what a man is he! 4. Notice what will be the result of this appointment, "That they might be called trees of righteousness," etc. The original is like "oaks of righteousness," that is, they shall become strong, firmly rooted, covered with verdure; they shall be like a well-watered tree for pleasantness. But the very pith of the text lies in a little word to which you must look. "Ye shall be *called* trees of righteousness." There are many mourning saints who are trees of righteousness, but nobody calls them so; they are so desponding that they give a doubtful idea to others. Observers ask, "Is this a Christian?" But, O mourners! if Jesus visits you, and gives you the oil of joy, men shall call you "trees of righteousness," they shall see grace in you. I know some Christian people who, wherever they go, are attractive advertisements of the Gospel. Nobody could be with them for half-an-hour without saying, "Whence do they gain this calm, this peace, this tranquillity, this holy delight and joy?" Many have been attracted to the Cross of Christ by the holy pleasantness and cheerful conversation of those whom Christ has visited with the abundance of His love. 5. The result of all this goes further, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," that is to say, where there is joy imparted, and unction given from the Holy Spirit, instead of despondency, men will say, "It is God's work, it is a tree that God has planted, it could not grow like that if anybody else had planted it; this man is a man of God's making, his joy is a joy of God's giving." 6. Another word remains, "That He might be glorified." That is the great result we drive at, and that is the object even of God Himself, "that He might be glorified." For when men see the cheerful Christian, and perceive that this is God's work, then they own the power of God. Meanwhile, the saints, comforted by your example, praise and bless God, and all the Church lifts up a song to the Most High. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Grief transformed:—There is a beautiful thing which comes out more distinctly if we follow the Revised Version, and read it as "to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." There we have two contrasted pictures suggested, one of a mourner with grey ashes strewed upon his dishevelled locks, and his spirit clothed in gloom like a black robe; and to him there comes One who, with gentle hand, smoothes the ashes out of his hair, trains a garland round his brow, anoints his head with oil, and, stripping off the trappings of woe, casts about him a bright robe fit for a guest at a festival. That is the miracle that Jesus Christ can do for every one, and is ready to do for us, if we will let Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The Joy-bringer:—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE JOY-BRINGER TO MEN BECAUSE HE IS THE REDEEMER OF MEN. In the original application of my text to the deliverance from captivity, this gift of joy, and change of sorrow into gladness, was no independent and second bestowment, but was simply the issue of the one that preceded it, viz. the gift of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The gladness was a gladness that welled up in the heart of the captives set free, and coming out from the gloom of the Babylonian dungeon into the sunshine of God's favour, with their faces set towards Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." You have only to keep firm hold of this connection between these two thoughts to come to the crown and centre-point of this great prophecy, as far as it applies to us, and that is that it is Christ as the Emancipator, Christ as He who brings us out of the prison and bondage of the tyranny of sin, who is the great Joy-giver. For there is no real, deep, fundamental and impregnable gladness possible to a man until his relations to God have been rectified, and until, with the consciousness of forgiveness and the Divine love nestling warm at his heart, he has turned himself away from his dread and his sin, and has recognized in his Father God "the gladness of his joy." There are many of us who feel that life is sufficiently comfortable without any kind of reference to God

at all. But about all that kind of surface joy, the old words are true, "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful," and hosts of us are satisfied with joys which Jesus has no part in bringing, simply because our truest self has never once awakened. When it does you will find out that no one can bring real joy who does not take away guilt and sin. II. JESUS CHRIST TRANSFORMS SORROW BECAUSE HE TRANSFORMS THE MOURNER. All that this Joy-bringer and Transmuter of grief into its opposite is represented as doing, is on the man who feels the sorrow. In regard to the ordinary sorrows of life, He affects these not so much by an operation upon our circumstances as by an operation upon ourselves, and transforms sorrow and brings gladness, because He transforms the man that endures it. The landscape remains the same, the difference is the colour of the glass through which we look at it. How does He do it? 1. By giving to the man sources of joy, if he will use them, altogether independent of external circumstances. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom," etc. The paradox of the Christian life is "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. 2. There is another way by which for us, if we will use our privileges, the sorrows of life may be transmuted, because we, contemplating them, have come to a changed understanding of their meaning. We shall never understand life if we class its diverse events simply under the two opposite categories of good—evil; prosperity—adversity; gains—losses; fulfilled expectations—disappointed hopes. Put them all together under one class—discipline and education; means for growth; means for Christlikeness. When we have found out, what it takes a long while for us to learn, that the lancet and the bandage are for the same purpose, and that opposite weathers conspire to the same end, that of the harvest, the sting is out of the sorrow, the poison is wiped off the arrow. 3. Here we may suggest a third way by which a transformation wrought upon ourselves transforms the aspect of our sorrows, and that is that possessing independent sources of joy, and having come to learn the educational aspect of all adversity, we thereby are brought by Jesus Christ Himself to the position of submission. That is the most potent talisman to transform mourning into praise. An accepted grief is a conquered grief; a conquered grief will very soon be a comforted grief; and a comforted grief is a joy. III. JESUS GIVES JOY AFTER SORROW. Jesus Christ, even here and now, gives these blessed results of our sorrows, if they are taken to the right place, and borne in the right fashion. For it is they "that mourn in Zion" that He thus blesses. There are some of us, I fear, whose only resource in trouble is to fling ourselves into some work, or some dissipation. And there are some of us whose only resource for deliverance from our sorrows is that, after the wound has bled all it can, it stops bleeding, and that grief simply dies by lapse of time, and for want of fuel. An affliction wasted is the worst of all waste. But if we carry our grief into the sanctuary, then, here and now, it will change its aspect, and be a solemn joy. I say nothing about the ultimate result, where every sorrow rightly borne shall be represented in the future life by some stage in grace or glory, where every tear shall be crystallized, if I might so say, into a flashing diamond, which flings off the reflection of the Divine light, where "there shall be no sorrow nor sighing, nor any more pain, for the former things are passed away." When the lesson has been learnt, God burns the rod. But there is another sadder transformation of joy into its opposite. I saw a few days ago, on a hill-top, a black circle among the grass and heather. There had been a bonfire there on Coronation night, and it had all died down, and that was the end—a hideous ring of scorched barrenness amidst the verdure. Take care that your gladnesses do not die down like that, but that they are pure, and being pure are undying. Separation from Christ makes joy shallow, and makes it certain that at last, instead of a garland, shall be ashes on the head, and that, instead of a festal robe, the spirit shall be wrapped in a garment of heaviness. (*Ibid.*) **Trees of Righteousness.**—*Trees of righteousness:*—Notice some points of comparison which this figure suggests when used to represent the redeemed. I. THEY ARE TREES. This indicates—1. That they have life. They are not inanimate objects. 2. That they have dependent life. They are planted in the ground. Their fertility depends on the soil. Those planted in Christ shall be fruitful. 3. That they have a life of growth. Spiritual life is a development. II. THEY ARE GOODLY TREES. "Trees of righteousness." Not poisonous or useless objects. The object of trees is—1. To afford shelter. They shade from the heat and the storm. 2. To adorn the world. They are the beauty of earth, its crown and delight. 3. To give fruit. They are the profit and sustenance of the sower. Trees of righteousness are all this in the spiritual world. (*Homilist.*) *Trees of righteousness:*—The imagery in the text, taken from trees, is very frequently used in the Bible (Ps. i. 3,

xcii. 12; Jer. xvii. 8; Hosea xiv. 5–7; John xv.; Rev. xxii. 2). I. IN WHAT RESPECT DO TREES REPRESENT CHRISTIANS? 1. Trees contribute largely to keep the atmosphere pure and healthful. When human beings, and indeed all animals, breathe out, there is given off a gas which is injurious and destructive to animal life. But this deleterious air is needful to the life and growth of plants; so trees and vegetation eagerly appropriate the air which is hurtful to us. At the same time the leaves of trees give off oxygen, which tends to purify the air, and render it fit for us to breathe. When the air around us has passed through an extent of leaf surface it is pure and invigorating. There is a moral atmosphere, and the presence of Christian people in that moral atmosphere contributes to make it pure. 2. Trees supply many articles which are most useful in commerce—such as food, clothing, medicine. These things, as products in which men trade, tend to the enrichment and general benefit of society. Trees yield timber, with which our houses are built and our furniture is made. Palms yield edible fruits, and a great quantity of oil. And so, like these trees, true Christians contribute in many ways to benefit society at large. Look around on our own country, and notice the immense number of charitable institutions, etc. To what do they owe their existence? Unquestionably to the power of Christian love. 3. Trees are objects of great beauty. Scripture and poetry recognize the beauty of trees, and every one who has any eye to enjoy the charm of the country will readily admit that trees are objects of indescribable beauty. So there is a beauty, a charm, in the graces of Christian character as seen in purity of life, a loving, self-denying spirit which lays out its powers for the good of others (1 Cor. xiii. 4–8; Phil. iv. 8). 4. Trees are endowed with great strength. There are grand old oaks which have stood for more than a thousand years. A friend told me that an engineer in his employ saw a cedar in Algiers which must have been more than two thousand years old. A writer in the *Times* gives the following calculation as to the age of the Mammoth pine of California. He says, "A friend has sent me two specimens of the wood of the *Wellingtonea gigantea*. Of the timber sent there are two pieces: one a specimen of the older, or heart-wood; the other a specimen of the more recent, or sap-wood." He then goes into a careful and elaborate calculation as to the age of the tree, and on the lowest estimate, he makes out that the tree was five thousand five hundred and forty-four years old. This long duration suggests how many storms and dangers the grand old tree has had to weather. So true Christians are possessed of great strength. Think of the many temptations, the many severe trials, through which such believers have had to pass! II. THE PLANTING OF THESE TREES. They are not self-planted. They are not of man's planting. "The planting of the Lord." 1. Their nature in its fruit-bearing power and in its beauty and strength is given to them by the Lord. How did they become "trees of righteousness?" Not by any self-originated choice or act of their own. The Gentiles are spoken of by Paul as being 'cut out of the wild olive tree, which is wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature into the good olive tree." Here the scion of the wild olive is represented as grafted on the stock of the productive oil-bearing one; and they are called on to remember that they derive their life and nourishment from the root of the stock, which, being holy, makes the branches holy (Rom. xi. 16, 18). All their life and sufficiency are from Christ alone. 2. The culture, as well as the nature, of these trees is of the Lord. "My Father is the Husbandman." "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." III. THE GREAT DESIGN AND END OF OUR BEING MADE TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "That He might be glorified." 1. The glory of the Lord and our spiritual welfare go together. The beauty of the flower, the fruitfulness of the tree, are the glory of the gardener. 2. The glory of the Lord is the highest end which any created being can serve. This was the grand end Christ kept before Himself, and accomplished: "I have glorified Thee on the earth." This is the deepest desire of every saint in his holiest moments: "that God in all things may be glorified." (*G. W. Humphreys, B.A.*) *Trees of righteousness:*—The passage takes in the whole family of God. Observe—I. WHY THEY ARE CALLED TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. A tree is the beauty of the landscape. The Church of God is the beauty of the world. 2. A tree is remarkable for its strength. And there is that in the believer that gives one the conviction of strength. Where is his strength? He is united to Christ—"Rooted in Him." 3. A tree is fruitful (Phil. i. 9–11; Jno. xv. 5). II. THEY ARE DESCRIBED AS "THE PLANTING OF THE LORD." There are some trees that are not of His planting, and yet they seem for a time to be good trees. There is a good deal of outward acquaintance with Divine things, a good deal of outward change;

yet, after all, it is not a tree of the Lord's right hand planting. It is a solemn truth—"Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." It may look well for a time; it may be fair and promising to the outward eye; but not being rooted in Christ, not bringing forth fruit, it shall be destroyed. But these are trees of "the Lord's planting." He chose them for His own. And with His own hand He transplants them out of the "waste howling wilderness," and plants them in His own garden. All the "trees of righteousness" are transplants. The end for which the Lord did it was that they might be "trees of righteousness." III. THE GREAT END. "That He might be glorified." It shall be His glory when they exhibit the beauty of a consistent profession. He shall be glorified especially by their fruitfulness. Concluding remarks: If you are trees of the Lord, do not be surprised if He should take His knife. You must be exposed to storms. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *Trees of righteousness:*—I. MEN AS TREES. 1. As all trees have roots, so have all men. These roots are the principles which lie at the foundation of their character. These principles perform the same functions in the moral organism of a man as the root does in the material organism of a tree. The peculiar business of a tree-root is to collect the necessary food for sustaining the living body of the tree; and for this purpose it seems to be endowed with a kind of instinct which enables it to attract only those substances which correspond to the nature of the tree and will contribute to its growth, and to repel those which are different and would accordingly prove hurtful. Similarly, the principles which underlie human character are virtually the food-finders and life-sustainers of the soul, groping about among the scenes and circumstances and events by which they are surrounded, for such moral or immoral entertainment as is demanded by the nature of the being with which they are connected. 2. As all trees grow by assimilation from within, so do all men. You cannot build a tree, as you can build a house or construct a ship, by mechanical additions from without. The tree must build itself, by a delicate machinery of its own. In the same way does human nature grow by assimilation from within. 3. As all trees put forth leaves, so do all men. They put forth the leaves of an outward profession, not necessarily in words, but tacitly in external behaviour. A man without a profession is an impossibility. If there be vitality in a tree the annual approach of spring will make it bud and put forth tender sprouts; and so if there be vitality in a soul it will as surely clothe itself in a garment of speech and action. And as the leaves assume a shape and tint corresponding to the nature of the tree, so do the words and deeds of men contract a character from their souls. 4. As all trees produce fruit of some kind or other, so do all men. There is an endless variety among the fruits of the earth, but there are no trees that have not fruit of some kind; and there are no souls that are not continually producing fruit, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. II. SAINTS AS TREES. 1. The saints as trees differ from the rest of men as to the kind of fruit they produce. They are "trees of righteousness," lit. oaks of righteousness, a phrase susceptible of different renderings, though the obvious one is perhaps as good as any, "oaks that bear the fruits of righteousness." Saints are instruments of holy service "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." They produce good works by the very same necessity as an oak bears acorns—a necessity of nature. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc. 2. Saints as trees differ from the rest of men as to the special training or culture they receive. They are "the planting of the Lord." Other trees grow wild on the open common of an unprotected and sin-accursed world, enjoying no other culture than the laws of nature and the winds and rains of heaven are able to impart; but these have been uprooted from the sterile soil in which they grew and planted in the garden of the Church—uprooted by the skilful hand of the Great Husbandman of souls, and planted beside the gentle streams of grace that proceed from the throne of God, in some quiet and secluded corner, where they are carefully trained and tended. 3. Saints as trees differ from the rest of men as to the ultimate end for which they grow. Other trees have no end to serve beyond bearing their appropriate fruits, but these have a special view to the honour and reputation of the Husbandman who planted them; being "the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified." So does Christ say of saints, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (*W. Jones.*) *Tongues in trees:*—1. One thing which strikes us in connection with trees is their very small beginnings, *e. g.* the oak. The trees of righteousness are small in their beginnings. Faith, as exercised at first, is only as a grain of mustard seed. Grace, as first experienced in the heart, is a very tender plant. Look at Paul, and Wesley, and Whitefield, and many others, who illustrate the perfection that is attainable here. And see what perfection these trees of

righteousness may attain hereafter. 2. Trees are slow and progressive in their growth. The concentric circles that may be seen within certain kinds of trees, have come there by the annual addition of one; and in full-grown ones there may be counted as many as a hundred or more. Hence an idea may be gathered of the gradualness of development in tree life. The trees of righteousness are often similarly slow and progressive in their growth. We should not be discouraged because we do not reach perfection at once. Walking is a favourite Scriptural mode of describing the progress of a godly life. The believer is represented first as a babe, then as passing through a state of youthhood, and then as having reached the maturity of manhood in Christ Jesus. 3. Great varieties distinguish trees. Among the well-known kinds are the strong and kinglike oak, the lofty and aspiring pine, the graceful and lovely beech, the timid and trembling aspen, the unsocial thorn, the dependent ivy, and many others. There are equally great varieties within the sphere of religious life. Moses' nature was equable, Elijah's stern and inflexible, Isaiah's buoyant, Jeremiah's plaintive, Peter's impulsive, and John's amiable. And what varieties are met with in the sphere of modern religious life! We may be reminded, in relation to this fact, that we should not trouble ourselves because we are not like somebody else. 4. Observe in trees a dependence on external conditions for their growth and development. In all the stages of vegetable life the influences of the soil and of the atmosphere are necessary to a full and healthy growth. The trees of righteousness require certain outward conditions for their growth and development. Their spiritual vitality is not self-originated and underived. We should therefore not neglect communion with Him who is "the fountain of life and of grace," by the means which are intended to secure us these benefits. 5. Notice also the different effects upon trees of the sun's powerful influence at certain seasons of the year, and of the diminution of that influence at other seasons. When the sun comes forth "as a bridegroom from his chamber," and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race," as he does in the vernal season of the year, how beautifully the trees begin to exhibit signs of returning life! How they put forth shoots! How they cover themselves with foliage! And how, by and by, they are laden with fruits! But when his influence is partially withdrawn or modified, as in the autumnal season, how quickly there appear the tints which are sure signs of decay. God's people are similarly affected by the Sun of Righteousness. When they enjoy His radiant and genial beams, as they never fail to do when they do not interpose their own unbelief, how admirable is the effect! But when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws Himself, or hides His face from His people through their unfaithfulness, then there ensues a period of decay, and even death. 6. Trees are useful. This is not merely the case with such trees as provide us with delicious fruit, or furnish us with materials for the manufacture of articles of clothing, or supply us with certain medicines, or yield us timber for the construction of our dwellings, it is the case with all trees. A writer, who is an authority, tells us, "Every tree in nature makes itself felt in the good it does the air." The trees of righteousness are useful. This is the case with all. We may not have the commanding abilities of some, nor occupy the positions of influence of others; but all who are living truly Christian lives, however hidden from public gaze, are helping to purify the moral atmosphere of society, and of the world. And this is usefulness that receives Divine approval. (*J. A. Rimmer.*)

The forests and orchards of God:—THE SUGGESTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND OF THEIR RELATION TO HIM. "Trees." II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS CHARACTER IS TO BECOME THE POSSESSION OF MEN. "The planting of the Lord." God is His own gardener, and those who would know the blessedness of being "God's husbandry" are to be in all things submitted to God's hand. 1. God chooses the position in which His trees are to be planted. 2. He hides the roots in life-giving soil. 3. He visits our life with the renewing power of His own life. "As the rain cometh down and watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud," so is the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the inner life of those who "ask the Father" that it may be so. III. THE GREAT PURPOSE WHICH THIS CHARACTER IS TO SERVE. "That He might be glorified." Christians are called to increase the honour of the Divine name. 1. In the spiritual condition of their own life. Trees of righteousness must exhibit the beauty and symmetry of a rightly-formed and healthily-developed spiritual life. 2. This character has to be shown as the most truly living thing the world contains. If you erect a building and fill it with industrious or noisy people, and by the side of it plant a few elm trees, you will find that "life's little day ebbs out" from within the house, that even the building crumbles towards decay, and that the trees, living and increasing in

force of life, will run their roots beneath and through the foundations until they have warped the whole structure and brought it to its overthrow. One has standing room for its lifeless form on the earth, the other lives, and therefore overcomes. And the Christian has to show the world that though it may erect the sturdiest structures out of itself, there is a mightier presence in the character of godliness which by roots of living union gathers its power from Christ, and which will overthrow resistance and establish itself with the calm irresistibleness of eternal life planted and watched over by the almighty and unchangeable God. 3. Trees of righteousness must cause men to taste the fruit of righteousness and to live under its shadow. We all love shadow. None would like to be deprived of its beauty or of its refreshment. And even to think afar off of some fruit-trees is to experience real pleasure. Oh! for the spirit of Christ to dwell in us so richly that to have our society would be like walking beneath thickly overhanging trees in the noontide heat, or roaming at will in a well watered garden, and would cause men to give ungrudging testimony that Christian character was earth's true similitude of heaven. (*W. H. Jackson.*) "*Trees of righteousness*":—Keeping to the natural figure under which the things of God in man are described, these must be trees of beauty and symmetry, developed equally on all sides, with timber, twig, and foliage answering to the ideal in a mind which knows what a perfect tree would be. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. **And they shall build the old wastes.**—*Building the old wastes*:—There are many wastes in the world, and there are all sorts of them. But of all sad and melancholy waste places, there is none so melancholy, so terrible, so desperate as a waste soul—a soul in which there is no sense of right and wrong in the tribunal of conscience; a soul where there is no distinct, manly, nobly inspiring purpose for spending and occupying life; a soul in which the mind is not instructed or fed with useful knowledge, but which lies fallow; a soul where the heart is a cage of unclean birds. I. As to THE METHODS of building up these waste places. Let us honestly confess that there are many of them, and none of them to be despised; and each is to be put in its proper order, and none can be dispensed with—one comes first, another second, and another third. There are in this earth of ours whole nations which may be called waste places. 1. The first thing to be done with the waste place of a great nation is to bring civilization into it; then the soil of the heart is prepared for better things to come. 2. Then many of our missionaries have to form a language: there are many words missing in the people's dialect, without which they could not understand the truths of the Gospel. Then when a man is educated, he finds his imagination filled with new ideas; he feels he has taken his place in the great society of mankind, and is ready to listen to the truths which a little while before he trampled under his feet. 3. Another great means of building waste places is commerce and trade. 4. Good government is necessary. No man can receive the greatest and loftiest truths when they are living in a constant state of danger. 5. Preach the Gospel of Christ. II. THE INSTRUMENTS. Whom does God use to build up the waste places? 1. His Son is the great Builder (Luke iv. 18, etc.). 2. Then as His representative, and, so to speak, in His place, His minister, His ambassador, His mouthpiece, His witness, the Church of God. Her great mission is to preach the Word of God, and administer the sacraments of Christ. Then there are other ways. The Church must try to enter into all the needs, and difficulties, and wants of those to whom she ministers. (*A. W. Thorold, D.D.*) *Social needs: religious duties*:—Our work is a work of restoration. This message is infinitely varied in its tone. If we are indeed to build the "old wastes," we must see what has made them wastes; and we shall find that there have been three great enemies that have done this—disease and ignorance and sin. I. We must bring a message of good news to THE BODY. We must recognize its needs—its need of pure air, and wholesome food, and healthy homes; and, also, its craving, especially in the days of youth, for leisure and amusement, and even excitement. We must meet these cravings, not with the forbidding frown of the Puritan, as though they were in themselves sinful, nor yet with the easy-going smile of the good-natured Epicurean, as though they were the all in all of human happiness, but with sympathy and good sense and forethought, in the belief that they represent one part of the Father's will for His human children. II. We must to the full recognize the rights of THE MIND. A Gospel that has no message of good news to the intellect of man is but a mutilated Gospel. Literature, art, science, music, have not, indeed, the last word to say on man's relation to God, but they have a mighty and a lovely word to say; and it ought to be the joy of all Christ's truest ministers, lay and

clerical, to help in conveying such words to the ear and to the heart even of the poorest and dullest. Public libraries and museums, cheap concerts and cheap magazines, are among the truest weapons of those who would in our day destroy the works of the devil. III. Chiefly must we come face to face with sin, not only with a message against sin; we must have a message of good tidings also to HUMAN SOULS. And when I say "good tidings," I do not necessarily mean agreeable and attractive tidings. When Jesus said, "Repent ye and believe the Gospel," the call to repent, though hardly attractive, was in itself a Gospel. We cannot build the waste places in England, in morals and social customs, in ways of thinking and talking and feeling, unless we very plainly denounce what is unchristian in contemporary life. The message of the Gospel is not only a soothing message of forgiveness to the sinner who is troubled in mind, nor a tender message of companionship to the lonely and the bereaved, nor a consoling message of eventual justice to the wronged and the overborne. But there is also the voice which convinces the world of sin, the voice which says to society, irrespective of class, to rich as well as to poor, to poor as well as to rich: "In this and that you are wholly wrong; you are wrong in your expenditure of time, wrong in your expenditure of money, wrong in your estimate of the true prizes of life, wrong in your worship of comfort, wrong in your class isolation; wrong, many of you, in your very conception of religion." We have, if we are indeed witnesses of our Master, a message of good tidings to all alike, to all classes, to the rich and to the poor, to the highly cultivated and to the ignorant. (*H. M. Butler, D.D.*) *Antiquities revived:*—I. THE ANTIQUITIES THAT ARE LAID WASTE. 1. Vital godliness. 2. Apostolic doctrine. The sovereignty of God, substitution, sanctity, etc. 3. Loyalty to Jesus. 4. The unity of the Spirit. II. THE PROMISE OF THE SPECIAL REVIVALS THAT ARE TO TAKE PLACE. "They shall build," etc. (*J. Irons.*)

Ver. 6. **But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord.**—*Israel's priesthood among the nations:*—The meaning is simply that in relation to the Gentiles, Israel shall enjoy a position of priesthood analogous to the relation between priests and laymen. It was Israel's calling to be a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. xix. 6), and in the latter days this destiny will be fulfilled in their mediatorial relation to the outer world. Although prophecy in general accords a position of supremacy to Israelites in the future kingdom of God, the distinction is, perhaps, nowhere so definitely formulated as here. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *New Testament privileges expressed in Old Testament phraseology:*—Regarding the position assigned to the Hebrew nation after it has become the teacher of other peoples and the leader of their worship, as here declared, we can form no conception that will harmonize with the spirit of New Testament liberty and the abolition of all dividing-walls between the nations,—the prophet predicts New Testament matters in Old Testament fashion. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *God's priesthood v. man's priestcraft:*—When Christ came, all earthly priesthoods were abolished, and of all members of His kingdom it was to be said, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord." I. HOW IS THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD ENTERED? Aaron and his sons are the types of Christ's high priesthood and the priesthood of all believers. The Holy Ghost has most clearly taught by this type the order of entrance into spiritual priesthood. 1. The priests become so by virtue of their union with the high priest (Ex. xxviii. 1). And the call of Christ unto His high priesthood also includes the call of all His sons into their spiritual priesthood. 2. In the consecration of Aaron's sons to the priesthood there was also blood sprinkling. Christ's high priesthood rests on an accomplished sacrifice. What does my priesthood rest on? On blood, too. 3. The anointing gives the qualification for priesthood (1 John ii. 20, 27). 4. The qualification of garments (Ex. xxviii. 4, 40). II. THE PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES APPERTAINING TO THIS PRIESTHOOD. 1. To offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. ii. 5). Our bodies (Rom. xii. 1); our prayers; our praise; our intercessions. 2. It was the priest's duty and privilege to maintain the service of the sanctuary. Every believer, being a priest, has equal right with every other believer to engage in maintaining the service of the sanctuary. (*A. G. Brown.*)

Ver. 7. **Everlasting joy shall be unto them.**—*The everlasting joy:*—We pore with intense earnestness over the words which picture the joys of the future. "Everlasting joy." What are its springs? I. THE INWARD HARMONY, THE PERFECT ORDER OF THE BEING, THE CONCERT OF EVERY FACULTY AND FORCE IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE WILL OF GOD. That is the peace of God—the perfect

peace. The redeemed man is the governed man; the man who has re-found the King who can evoke his loyal passions, and control and direct his manifold powers. This rule, the rule of his true King, has been lost to him through sin. This supreme, complete control of his being heaven will restore. An unsphered planet could be won back to the harmony of its sister planets only by the attraction of their common sun. The King has appeared and claimed His own. We know little of heaven's occupations, the aspect of its homes, the modes of its speech, the forms of its life. We know only that the God-man is there, and reigns. He whom we can love with intensest passion, and serve with exulting joy, will meet us on its threshold, will sweep the flood of His attractions round every limb and organ of our being, and thrill us in one intense moment with the sense that we are one, that we are blessed. II. THE FULL VISION OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CREATION, the beholding of all that God has meant, and sin has marred, in the constitution of the worlds. III. THE COMMUNION OF THE BLESSED—the joy of fellowship when the struggle and toil are ended for ever—the companionship of the elect and beloved —intercourse with the elder spirits who are before the throne. (*J. R. Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 9. **And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles.**—*A blessed seed:*—The children of these persons themselves, that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the Church's seed, shall be "accounted to the Lord for a generation" (Ps. xxii. 30). 1. They shall signalize themselves, and make their neighbours to take notice of them. They shall distinguish themselves by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples; and they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them by making them the blessings of their age, and instruments of His glory; and by giving them remarkable tokens of His favour, which shall make them eminent, and get them respect from all about them. 2. God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God. (*M. Henry.*) *The life-testimony of the Christian missionary:*—The glorious fulfilment of this promise in its original and proper sense may be seen already in the influence exerted by the eloquent example of the missionary on the most ignorant and corrupted heathen, without waiting for the future restoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers. (*J. A. Alexander.*) **The seed which the Lord hath blessed.**—*The blessed seed:*—I. THERE IS A SEED OR RACE WHICH THE LORD HATH BLESSED. Elsewhere it is described as "the Israel of God (Gal. vi. 16). But it is neither co-extensive with, nor confined to, the descendants of Jacob (Rom. ix. 6–8; Gal. iii. 28, iv. 28; Eph. iii. 6; Phil. iii. 3). This seed God hath blessed abundantly. 1. With peace. 2. With purity. 3. With strength. 4. With hope. 5. With joy. 6. With that which is the source of the peace and hope and joy—an assurance of His love. II. THERE ARE OUTWARD SIGNS BY WHICH THOSE WHO BELONG TO THE SEED WHICH THE LORD HATH BLESSED MAY BE INFALLIBLY KNOWN. God has distinguished His ancient people by certain physical characteristics which have survived through many generations and have proved indestructible by all changes of climate and condition, so that wherever any of them are found we may say with confidence, these are the children of Abraham. And there are certain marks by which all who belong to God's spiritual Israel are as clearly marked off from their fellow-men. Such as— 1. Love for Christ. 2. Unworldliness. 3. Consistency. (*J. Harris, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. **I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.**—*The garments of salvation:*—I. Here is a GLAD RESOLVE. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." 1. Where there is a will there is generally a way, and sad though you be, something is gained if you will resolve to rejoice. 2. It is always "in the Lord" that we must rejoice. Friends are dying, helps are failing, hopes are being blasted. Rejoice in the Lord. 3. I further admire this resolve because we are by it determining to rejoice "greatly" in the Lord. If He is worth rejoicing in at all, He is worth rejoicing in greatly. 4. We are bidden to rejoice as to our inmost souls. "My soul" shall be joyful in my God. Soul-joy is the soul of joy, and there is no other joy worth the having. 5. The joy is in a personal God. "My soul shall be joyful in my God." I think the secret lies just there. It is one thing to rejoice in God, the God of nature, the God of providence, or, for that matter, the God of grace; but it is quite another thing to rejoice in "my God." II. There are RIGHT GOOD REASONS, the best of reasons, for this glad resolve. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

1. "He hath" done it. We may well say "I will," if we can already say "He hath." It is because "He hath" that we will. 2. "He hath clothed me." 3. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation." This is an effectual way of saying, "He hath saved me." (1) He has made us holy. (2) We ought also to wear the garment of humility. (3) Nor are Christians properly attired till they are clad with zeal as with a cloak. (4) May we not reckon also among the garments of salvation that "garment of praise" of which we have read in the third verse? (5) But chief of all the garments of salvation is the one that is here specially named, "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." But for this we could not know the others; this is both first and last of all. Whose righteousness? Not our own, but His. How, then, does it become ours? Just as a garment becomes ours. We put it on, we wear it, we bear it; it envelopes us. Believers are "accepted in the Beloved." (6) These garments of salvation are in our text associated with wedding robes. "As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels," just so the Lord has clothed us with garments of salvation, *i. e.* He has married us. The Church is His spouse. (7) There is a reference here also, though it does not appear in our version, to the decking of the priest. The margin reads, "As a bridegroom decketh as a priest," and I believe the Revised Version refers to the garland or tiara that the priest wears when sacrificing. It is gloriously true that we are made both kings and priests unto God. If these robes are festal and bridal, they are sacerdotal too. (8) The closing verse of the chapter, though it seems to introduce another metaphor, is very closely allied to our text, "As the earth bringeth forth her bud," etc. It looks as if what the Lord did for His people is comparable not merely to the arraying of the bride, or the decking of the priest, but to the arraying of this our earth, which at time of spring puts on its beautiful array, its garments of salvation, from whose new-sprung flowers the fresh incense rises, as if a garlanded priest were offering sacrifice to God. (*T. Spurgeon.*) **He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.**—*Dressed for eternity:*—I. THE SACRED DRESS. "The garments of salvation." 1. Garments are used as a covering. Is a garment for the body more needed than one for the soul? Which of us could stand in the presence of an angel without sinking to the ground in very shame? I draw your attention to the glory of God's garments of salvation —they completely cover all your iniquity and blot out all your sin. 2. A garment is used to beautify, to adorn. The garment of salvation is an adornment, for it reveals God in you to your neighbours. What can be more beautiful than a man or woman or child who tries to bless another! That is the life of the angels; i the life of God—ministering unto others. 3. Garments are used also as a sign of one's condition or occupation. Monarchs, priests, judges, and officers of state wear robes to indicate their real or implied superiority. Shakespere says, "the apparel oft proclaims the man." You can generally tell something about a man's character and calling from his clothing. The world judges of Christian people by the garments of their conduct. II. THE GIVER OF THE GARMENTS. III. THE PERSONAL APPROPRIATION. "He hath clothed me." Where is salvation? In Christ, and Christ is in and for us. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 11. **For as the earth bringeth forth her bud.**—*God's Word as seed:*—The Word in the mouth of the servant of Jehovah is the seed out of which great things are developed before all the world. The ground and soil of this development is mankind, the garden enclosed in it is the Church, and the great things themselves are righteousness as the present inner nature of His Church, and renown as its present outward manifestation. The impulsive force of the seed is Jehovah, but the bearer of the seed is the Servant of Jehovah, and the fact that it is possible to scatter the seed of a future so full of grace and glory is the ground of His festive rejoicing. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Certainty in redemption as in nature:*—As surely as the seed germinates in the earth, so surely will Jehovah bring to pass the great redemption here promised through the self-fulfilling power of His Word (cf. chaps. lv. 10, xlii. 9, xliii. 19, lviii. 8). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The springing forth of righteousness:*—It is a great act that God performs before our eyes during the spring and summer. I. It is a MANIFESTATION that we see. A mystery hidden during the winter months is being revealed. As Nature hides and then reveals, "So the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth." 1. It is a great manifestation of power that we see. We more readily associate God's power with vast convulsions; but this is the continuously working and gentle power of the Most High. Mark the consummate ease with which all is done. Yet not a sheath is

split, not a flower starts from the earth, but it is moved to do so by some power. 2. Is not this putting forth of leaves a great manifestation of mind? Suppose we discard the word "design" and accept the word "adaptation," do we escape from the suggestion of mental action? It is not possible to describe the facts as they appear to us without using language that implies adjustment by means of mind. 3. It is something more than mind that is manifested in the beauty of nature. Beauty is only visible to reason, indeed to the higher kind of reason. Your horse sees nothing of the beauty of the landscape; your dog despises your flowers. The images of all these things are reflected on their eyes as on yours, but they produce no emotion. So that in nature, it seems, special provision is made for the peculiar gratification of the higher mind of man. Surely it must be reason that thus addresses itself to reason, and if reason, then benevolence. II. The prophet sees in this THE PARABLE OF ANOTHER MANIFESTATION—a great moral and spiritual manifestation. "So the Lord God," etc. It is pathetic that he should maintain this faith through the "winter of his discontent." All spiritual influences are treasured up, and there is a conservation of spiritual force as of natural. But the preparation is long, as the winter that precedes the spring. How great the joy of knowing that we may help to provide or strengthen the forces of the world's true vernal hour. III. Remember that WE SHALL BE MANIFESTED (2 Cor. v. 10). Forces are gathering within us. When we "awake," may our surprise, even in respect to ourselves, be like that with which we look upon the new heavens and the new earth! (*A. H. Vine.*) *The reign of righteousness*:—I. THE GOSPEL IS THE DISPENSATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The love it reveals is a just love; the love it requires is a just love. It is a righteous system on two accounts. 1. It defends the rights of man. It takes nothing from him but his sin. (1) Every man has a right over his own person. God has given him a body, and over its senses and members he has a sovereign right; and if he does not by the use, or rather by the abuse of this right, sin against the laws, order, and welfare of society, no one but God has any authority to take it away. But, alas! man is often robbed of his original right. There are two systems in the world, which, without shame or apology, perpetuate and sanction the guilty act; slavery and religious persecution. Now the Gospel detects, condemns, and in proportion to its progress destroys, these dark and direful systems. (2) Man has a right over his property. The Gospel, by prohibiting fraud, theft, robbery, and every form of dishonesty, defends this right. It teaches men to be righteous in the acquisition, the enjoyment, and the disposal of wealth. (3) Man has a right over his mind. And it is the mind, after all, that gives value to man. But it is injured, enslaved by ignorance, error and the world. For there is a slavery darker and deeper than that which tortures the flesh. A mind in chains is the greatest injustice and the greatest distress in the universe. It is painful to think how little real advantage the souls of men have derived from civilization, and its attendant blessings. There is nothing on earth that can give purity, freedom, righteousness, and comfort to the soul, except the truth and spirit of Christ. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." 2. The Gospel also reveals a righteousness which God has provided for man as a guilty and lost sinner. It shows that God can save transgressors without transgressing Himself the eternal laws and the general interests of His government. To show this is its peculiar use. The chief object of the Gospel is not to prove that there is love in God, but to show the nature and extent of that love. Natural religion preaches the benevolence of God; revealed religion preaches the justice of His benevolence. The creation proves the existence of God's perfections; the cross of Christ harmonizes them. II. THE SPIRIT OF GOD ALONE CAN RENDER THIS SYSTEM OPERATIVE AND EFFICIENT IN THE WORLD. "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." The process by which this is to be accomplished is figuratively described in the text: "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth," so the Lord God will make the Gospel effectual to the salvation of men. The process is Divine, vivifying, progressive, and beautiful. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Spring*:—I. THE ONCOMING OF SPRING TEACHES THAT THERE IS A GOD. There is an invisible Creator, a reflection of whose thoughts and a product of whose power are all these magic spring wonders. II. Another lesson which spring particularly teaches is that THERE ARE ALLOTTED SEASONS FOR CERTAIN TASKS. Our Saviour thus on several occasions speaks of "times and seasons" ordained by God. And the Psalmist refers to this same arrangement when he says: "The Lord appointeth the moon for seasons, the sun knoweth his going down." In nature, therefore, spring holds an ordered place. As summer is for ripening and autumn for reaping, so is this

season for planting. It is the season for beginnings, the time for casting in the seed. Just such an order there is in the vineyard of grace. There is a spring-time of the Gospel, when all the conditions are favourable to making secure our eternal interests. Let every one heed this period. For it is most critical. It is his accepted time; it it his day of salvation. Ordinarily, the spring season is your youth. But in some cases it, doubtless owing to unfavourable early circumstances, comes later. III. ANOTHER LESSON OF SPRING WE LEARN ALONE FROM INSPIRATION. It is that taught by the prophet in the text: "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud," etc. That is, as Christians look upon nature putting on her flowery spring attire, and as they see a universal bursting forth of life, activity and joy, they are to behold in this a sign and a pledge of the progress, triumph and universal prevalence of the kingdom of God. IV. SPRING, MOREOVER, TEACHES THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND POWER OF BEAUTY. Does it not fulfil that Scripture which says "He hath made everything beautiful in his time"? And we learn therefrom that beauty is Divine. That we live not for blind utility and stern necessities alone. V. SPRING IS AN EMBLEM OF IMMORTALITY. This rejuvenation coming out of the icy tomb of winter shows us that Nature does not die—she only sleeps. Emerson puts this argument thus: "The soul does not age with the body. On the borders of the grave the wise man looks forward with equal elasticity of mind and hope. For it is the nature of intelligent beings to be for ever new to life." (*J. B. Remensnyder, D.D.*) *Spring:*—The teaching is that there is a spiritual spring-time appointed of God, and it will surely come. As certainly as spring comes to the earth physically, so surely will it come to the Church spiritually. I. CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BROAD FIELD OF THE WORLD. Let our meditations range through history and into prophecy. 1. This leads us to expect that there may be in God's work, and in our work for God, a period of unrequited labour. The analogy between the processes of nature and God's work in the Church holds good not only as to the revivals of spring, but as to the depressing incidents of winter. We must not always reckon to see nations converted the moment the Gospel is preached to them, and especially where new ground has been broken up (James v. 7). While the seed is under the ground a thousand adversaries present themselves, all apparently in array against its ever rising from the earth. When we survey the condition of affairs apart from faith in God, it may even seem to us that our cause is hopeless. 2. Our text excites the hope of a sacred spring-time. God's Gospel cannot perish. That which is sown in the garden springs up because there is vitality in it. Even so the truth of God is an incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. Life in garden seeds may be destroyed; under certain influences the life-germ may perish, but the living truth of God is immortal and unconquerable (1 Pet. i. 24, 25). But seed springs up, not only because of its own vitality, but because of its surrounding circumstances. So we may rest assured that God will make all things propitious in His providence to the growth of His own truth. But the corn comes not up out of the earth because it is vital, or because of its surroundings merely, for, as we believe, there is the actual power of God at work throughout nature. And it is because God is at work in His Gospel—mysteriously at work, it is true, but certainly at work, for the Spirit of the living God which was given at Pentecost has never gone back to heaven—that we expect the Gospel to flourish. If at any time our mind should grow desponding concerning the progress of the Gospel, it ought to encourage us to remember that the Gospel will conquer, not because it looks as if it would, but because God has declared and decreed that it shall do so. The disheartening circumstances of the winter may have been, all of them, promotive of the success of the spring. Remember what sowing has already gone before. Christ sowed the earth with His own self. Remember, too, who is the Husbandman of this field. Moreover, there is the Spirit Himself, as well as the Father and the Son, and He has designed to dwell in the midst of the Church. II. CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE GARDEN COMMITTED TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL CULTURE. As God's people you have all something to do for Him; I want you to do it in the best possible manner; but you will not do so unless you are of good heart. Be not impatient with regard to the result of what you are doing. Exercise faith as to results. III. CONTEMPLATE THIS SAME TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL STATE. Do you not sometimes fall into a wintry condition? There are times when we feel as if we had no life at all. In such times as these we cannot make any change in ourselves. What we cannot do, God can do. Spring comes from yonder sun, and so must our revival in religion, and our restored joy and peace, come from God. IV. CONTEMPLATE ALL THIS IN REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO ARE NEWLY AWAKENED. Those very desires of

yours show that there is some good seed sown in you. It is winter-time with you; may that winter do you good. Your only hope of anything better than what you are passing through lies in Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER LXII.

VER. 1. **For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace.**—*The Church blessed and made a blessing* (vers. 1–12):—The words of the great Deliverer are continued from the foregoing chapter. 1. He will not rest until the glorious change in the condition of His people is accomplished (ver. 1). 2. They shall be recognized by kings and nations as the people of Jehovah (vers. 2, 3). 3. She who seemed to be forsaken is still His spouse (vers. 4, 5). 4. The Church is required to watch and pray for the fulfilment of the promise (vers. 6, 7). 5. God has sworn to protect her and supply her wants (vers. 8, 9). 6. Instead of a single nation, all the nations of the earth shall flow into her (ver. 10). 7. The good news of salvation shall no longer be confined, but universally diffused (ver. 11). 8. The glory of the Church is the redemption of the world (ver. 12). (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The gradual development of the glory of Jerusalem*:—"For Zion's sake I shall not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not rest, until her righteousness breaks forth like morning-splendour, and her salvation like a burning torch." (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The moral illumination of the world*:—I. THE PRESENT IMPLIED OBSCURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. "The righteous One and the Saviour" (Vulgate). Whenever the righteous One and Saviour are hidden there is obscurity. II. HER ANTICIPATED GLORY. The burning lamp is a symbol of the presence of Jehovah. Jesus is termed "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person." Connect both the figures in the text. The Sun of Righteousness shall go forth like the light of the morning. 1. Manifestly. Light maketh manifest. 2. Irresistibly, as the light of the morning. 3. Universally. As all the earth turns to the sun, all are visited by the morning light. "Righteousness shall go forth as brightness" in all the earth. III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE WORK IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. "For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." Some think these are expressions of Jehovah. Correct or not, it is a Scriptural truth; it has long lain near the heart of God! Others, that Jesus is the speaker. The world is His purchased property, but His own world received him not. Yet the Father has pledged Himself to vindicate His right: "Ask of me." The most common opinion is that these words are Isaiah's, as a man of God and as a minister of God. It is proper to be used by all who mention the name of the Lord. Human agency, then, is the means employed. In providence God helps man by man. In grace the same. The Word of God is to be carried and held forth as light. The text indicates the manner also. 1. It shall be consistent—prayer and exertion. "Not hold my peace, not rest." 2. Affectionate exertions also—from a principle of love. "For Zion's sake." 3. Persevering. "Until the righteousness go forth." (*J. Summerfield, M.A.*) *The extension of the Gospel*:—I. THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL AS APPLIED TO YOUR OWN SOULS. Two inclusive blessings, righteousness and salvation. II. THE EXTENSION OF THIS BLESSING THROUGHOUT THE EARTH. It is evident that it is in the promise of God that it shall be so, because it is made the subject of the persevering intercession of Christ. "For Zion's sake will I," etc. III. THE GROUND OF OUR ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE EXTENSION OF THIS BLESSING. What can be stronger? It is the grace of the intercession of the Son of God. (*C. Bridges, M.A.*) *Divine unrest* (with vers. 6, 7):—I. THE CAUSE OF DIVINE UNREST. The needs of the Church, Zion; the condition of the city, Jerusalem. It is in the lack of "righteousness," the need of "salvation." This is still true of our Churches and cities. The sin is profound, the sorrow unfathomable. Yet there is not total darkness. There is twilight; but all the Divine yearning is, that the twilight may brighten into noon. II. THE NATURE OF THIS DIVINE UNREST. It is not chiefly that of indignation at wrong, but it is the unrest of anxiety for others, the unrest of pity. It is—1. Unselfish. 2. Universal. Even God will share it. III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS DIVINE UNREST. 1. In loud human proclamation of the truth. 2. In prayer to God. 3. In God's unrest,

in which He gives Jesus to save and bless. Christ's piercing cry of grief, "O Jerusalem," utters the unrest in God. Learn—(1) The remedy for all the unrest of the universe. "Righteousness," "Salvation." (2) The opportunity good men have for communion with God. Be unhappy because of the sin and sorrow in the world. Have fellowship with Christ. Share the Divine unrest. (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*) *The heavenly workers and the earthly watchers* (with vers. 6, 7):—1. The preceding chapter brings in Christ as proclaiming the great work of deliverance for which He is anointed of God; the following chapter presents Him as treading the wine-press alone, which is a symbol of the future judgment by the glorified Saviour. Between these two prophecies of the earthly life and the still future judicial energy, this chapter lies, referring, as I take it, to the period between these two—*i. e.* to all the ages of the Church's development on earth. For these Christ here promises His continual activity, and His continual bestowment of grace to His servants who watch the walls of Jerusalem. 2. Notice the remarkable parallelism in the expressions: "I will not hold My peace;" the watchmen "shall never hold their peace." And His command to them is literally, "Ye that remind Jehovah—no rest (or silence) to you! and give not rest to Him." So we have here Christ, the Church and God all represented as unceasingly occupied in the one great work of establishing "Zion" as the centre of light, salvation and righteousness for the whole world. I. THE GLORIFIED CHRIST IS CONSTANTLY WORKING FOR HIS CHURCH. We are too apt to regard our Lord's real work as all lying in the past, and, from the very greatness of our estimate of what He has done, to forget the true importance of what He evermore does. He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. In that session on the throne manifold and mighty truths are expressed. It proclaims the full accomplishment of all the purposes of His earthly ministry; it emphasizes the triumphant completion of His redeeming work by His death; it proclaims the majesty of His nature, which returns to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; it shows to the world, as on some coronation day, their King on His throne, girded with power. But whilst on the one side Christ rests as from a perfected work which needs no addition nor repetition, on the other He rests not day nor night. When the heavens opened to the rapt eyes of John in Patmos, the Lord whom he beheld was not only revealed as glorified in the lustre of the inaccessible light, but as actively sustaining and guiding the human reflectors of it. He "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand," and "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Not otherwise does my text represent the present relation of Christ to His Church. "I will not rest." Through all the ages His power is in exercise. He inspires in good men all their wisdom, and every grace of life and character. Nor is this all. There still remains the wonderful truth of His continuous intercession for us. In its widest meaning that word expresses the whole of the manifold ways by which Christ undertakes and maintains our cause. So we have not only to look back to the cross, but up to the throne. From the cross we hear a voice, "It is finished." From the throne a voice, "For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." II. CHRIST'S SERVANTS ON EARTH DERIVE FROM HIM A LIKE PERPETUAL ACTIVITY FOR THE SAME OBJECT. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." On the promise follows, as ever, a command, "Ye that remind Jehovah, keep not silence." There is distinctly traceable here a reference to a twofold form of occupation devolving on these Christ-sent servants. They are watchmen, and they are also God's remembrancers. In the one capacity as in the other, their voices are to be always heard. The former metaphor is common in the Old Testament, as a designation of the prophetic office, but, in accordance with the genius of the New Testament, as expressed on Pentecost, when the spirit was poured out on the lowly as well as on the high, on the young as on the old, and all prophesied, may be fairly extended to designate not some select few, but the whole mass of Christian people. The remembrancer's priestly office belongs to every member of Christ's priestly kingdom, the lowest and least of whom has the privilege of unrestrained entry into God's presence-chamber, and the power of blessing the world by faithful prayer. 1. Our voices should ever be heard on earth. A solemn message is committed to us by the very fact of our belief in Jesus Christ and His work. 2. Our voices should ever be heard in heaven. They who trust God remind Him of His promises by their very faith; it is a mute appeal to His faithful love, which He cannot but answer. Beyond that, their prayers come up for a memorial before God, and have as real an effect in furthering Christ's kingdom on earth as is exercised by their entreaties and proclamations to men. 3. These two forms of action ought to be

inseparable. Each, if genuine, will drive us to the other, for who could fling himself into the watchman's work, with all its solemn consequences, knowing how weak his voice was, and how deaf the ears that should hear, unless he could bring God's might to his help? And who could honestly remind God of His promises and forget his own responsibilities? 4. The power for both is derived from Christ. He sets the watchmen; He commands the remembrancers. And, as the Christian power of discharging these twofold duties is drawn from Christ, so our pattern is His manner of discharging them, and the condition of receiving the power is to abide in Him. Christ asks no romantic impossibilities from us, but He does ask a continuous, systematic discharge of the duties which depend on our relation to the world, and on our relation to Him. III. THE CONSTANT ACTIVITY OF THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST WILL SECURE THE CONSTANT OPERATION OF GOD'S POWER. "Give Him no rest:" let there be no cessation to Him. These are bold words. Those who remind God are not to suffer Him to be still. The prophet believes that they can regulate the flow of Divine energy, can stir up the strength of the Lord. It is easy to puzzle ourselves with insoluble questions about the co-operation of God's power and man's; but practically, is it not true that God reaches His end, of the establishment of Zion, through the Church? The great reservoir is always full to the brim; however much may be drawn from it, the water sinks not a hair's-breadth; but the bore of the pipe and the power of the pumping-engine determine the rate at which the stream flows from it. "He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Hindrances to the spread of the Gospel:—Our particular inquiry is, What obstacles to the conversion of the world are found among those who, in different ways, are enlisted in the cause of foreign missions? I. THE DEFECT OF OUR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, OR THE WANT OF A HIGHER DEGREE OF HOLINESS. II. THE DIRECT INDULGENCE OF AFFECTIONS WHICH ARE SELFISH AND EARTHLY. III. DIVISION AND STRIFE AMONG CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS. IV. THE UNNECESSARY EXCITEMENT OF POPULAR PREJUDICE. V. FALLING SHORT IN OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO THE BENEVOLENT USE OF PROPERTY. VI. THE WANT OF A PROPER FEELING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR THE SUCCESS OF OUR EFFORTS. (*Leonard Woods, D.D.*) *The encouragements and duties of Christians:*—I. ENCOURAGEMENTS. 1. There are declarations respecting the character and essential attributes of God, as, for example, His sovereignty, His power, His justice, His wisdom, His love; even from which, if we had no express or specific direction, we might justly and safely infer that the Almighty cannot always permit His own world to remain the almost unmitigated form of general apostasy and wretchedness; and that for the sake of His own glory He will cause a vast and mighty change, by which the revolt of the world shall be terminated, and by which it shall be recovered and reclaimed to Himself. 2. There are declarations with regard to the sufficiency and design of our Saviour's sacrifice (John i. 29, xii. 32; Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2). That the sacrifice of Christ, of which such is the declared sufficiency and design has hitherto but very partially and imperfectly accomplished its object is plain; that, so long as the world continues as it is, that partiality and imperfection must still continue is plain also; and we must therefore judge that it never can fulfil the objects for which it was originally offered, except in the final effusion of the Divine Spirit among all the nations of the earth. 3. There are declarations in regard to the majesty and extent of the Saviour's exaltation and royalty. As the reward and the recompense of His sufferings, He has been made the possessor of a wonderful mediatorial kingdom, a kingdom in the gaining and maintaining of the authority of which the Spirit is the agent, and the Word is the instrument—that kingdom in which the Spirit, through the Word, is destined to maintain a universal sway (Ps. ii. 7, 8; Isa. ix. 6; Ps. lxii. 8, etc.). 4. There are those declarations with regard to the final and renovating change, as we find them expressed throughout the general structure of the prophetical writings. Because He who cannot lie has promised, therefore we believe. II. OBLIGATIONS. 1. There are peculiar duties pressing upon the ministers and other public officers of the Church of Christ. The ministers are called upon to cultivate peculiar eminence in personal holiness; they ought to cultivate an enlarged and most accurate acquaintance with evangelical truth, an ardent zeal for the glory of God, a tender compassion for the souls of men! They ought to give themselves up wholly to their high vocation. They ought to labour with quenchless ardour and perseverance, while prayer ought to be, as it were, their very food, their very air, and their very being. As to the other public officers of the Church, their special duty appears to be the following—exemplary firmness in the belief of Christian doctrine, in the practice of Christian precepts, and in the

manifestation of a Christian spirit; fervent brotherly love amongst themselves, towards all their fellow-Christians, and especially towards the poor, whose interests they are invoked to superintend; cheerful assistance to the pastors of the flock, in all measures which may be deemed proper for preserving the purity of the Church, and for the conversion of the ungodly; and an earnest endeavour with regard to all departments of Christian character, that they may shine as lights in the world. 2. But there are general duties which press upon all the members of a Christian Church. (1) A careful avoidance of all worldly conformity. (2) The practice of sincere brotherly affection towards all other followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Increased zeal in maintaining and extending that ministry which has been ordained for the conversion of men. (4) A strong mental confidence in the fact that the change upon which our aspirations have been fixed shall actually be accomplished. There is nothing by which God is so much dishonoured as unbelief. (5) There must also be the spirit of importunate prayer (vers. 1, 6). (*James Parsons.*) *Intercessory prayer and the Divine response:*—The prophet here tells us—I. WHAT HE WILL DO FOR THE CHURCH (ver. 1). II. WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR THE CHURCH (vers. 2–5). 1. The Church shall be greatly admired. "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness," etc. 2. She shall be truly admirable. "Thou shalt be called by a new name," etc. Two names God shall give her. (1) He shall call her His crown (ver. 3). (2) He shall call her His spouse (vers. 4, 5). (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 2. **And thou shalt be called by a new name.**—*The new name* (with ver. 12):—According to the Hebrew idiom, the name which expresses the nature and character of a person is used as equivalent to that nature and character. The promises of these verses involve, accordingly, far more than appears upon the surface. I. THE NEW NAME ABOLISHES THE OLD. In the prophetical writings Israel's sins are very plainly described and very faithfully upbraided. The favoured people are called rebels and traitors, idolaters and spiritual adulterers. Upon their repentance, the old reproach is wiped away, and the old appellations are discarded. This is how Divine mercy treats all true penitents and believers. Former sins are forgotten, former rebukes are reversed, former sentences of condemnation are cancelled. II. THE NEW NAME EXPRESSES A NEW CHARACTER. The Christian dispensation provides, by peculiar agencies and spiritual powers, for the removal of the nature and life of men (2 Cor. v. 17). In accordance with the fact is the expression of the fact; in accordance with the new nature, the new birth, the new life, is the new name. III. THE NEW NAME IS SIGNIFICANT OF A NEW STATE OF FAVOUR AND ACCEPTANCE. Especially those upon whom the great change has passed are the Lord's. His possession and property, His beloved and honoured, for whom no privileges are too great and no dignities too eminent. The new name is His name who confers it, and who delights to deem and to call His beloved ones His own. (*Homiletical Library.*)

Vers. 3–5. **Thou shalt also be a crown of glory.**—*Zion a crown of glory in God's hand:*—It is only through figurative representations that prophecy here sees what Zion will be in the future; she becomes a crown of adornment, a tiara (the head-dress of the high priest, Ex. xxviii. 4; Zech. iii. 5; and of the King, Ezek. xxi. 26) of royal dignity in the hand of Jehovah her God. It is a leading feature in the picture that Jehovah holds the crown in His hand. Zion is not the ancient crown which the Eternal bears on His head, but she is the crown which He holds in His hand, because in Zion He is recognized by all creation; the whole history of redemption is the history of Jehovah's taking the kingdom and bringing it to perfection,—in other words, the history of the working out of this crown. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken.**—*A joyful change of condition:*—"No more shall it be called to thee (shalt thou be called) Azubah (Forsaken), and thy land shall no more be called Shemamah (Desolate); but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (Married), for Jehovah delights in thee, and thy land shall be married." The joyful change of condition is expressed in the prophet's favourite manner, by significant names. The common version not only mars the beauty of the passage, but renders it in some degree unintelligible to the English reader, by translating the first two names and retaining the others in their Hebrew dress. It is obvious that all four should be treated alike, *i. e.* that all the Hebrew forms should be retained, or none. Henderson prefers the latter method, on the ground that "the names are merely symbolical, and will never be employed as proper names." It is probable, however, that they were all familiar

to the Jews as female names in real life. This we know to have been the case with two of them (1 Kings xxii. 42; 2 Kings xxi. 1). It is better, therefore, to retain the Hebrew forms, in order to give them an air of reality as proper names, and at the same time to render them intelligible by translation. In the last clause there is reference to the primary meaning of the verb, viz. that of owning or possessing; and as the inhabitants of towns are sometimes called in Hebrew their "possessors," its use here would suggest, as at least one meaning of the promise, thy land shall be inhabited, and so it is translated in the Targum. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Spiritual espousal:*—I invite your attention to some reflections on the Scriptural use of marriage, as a type of the mystical union betwixt Christ and His Church. This tender, beautiful image implies—I. CHOICE. In all nations there has been the instinctive rule that the initiative choice is not with the bride, but with the bridegroom. Its spiritual parallel is in the declaration of Jesus to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." "I am jealous over you," said Paul, "with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." At the same time all are bound, because all are invited, to "seek the Lord while He may be found," to "choose this day whom ye will serve;" then the farther element in the marriage symbol will be verified. II. DEVOTION. You will love Him because He first loved you. It is often observed in ordinary married life, how the mutual love of husband and wife enables them to bear, not only without bitterness or mutual recriminations, but with a greater clinging to, and confidence in each other, the trials, sorrows, and burdens of life. Love lightens the load, when each one, for the other's sake, cheerfully takes his or her share. The love of Christ endears Him to the believer, and the believer to Him. III. INSEPARABLE UNION. Earthly ties of man and wife are liable to many incidents of severance. Necessities of particular callings in life sometimes separate them, lands and seas asunder. Guilt, aversion, insanity, disease and death, often dissolve the union, which once bid fair to be firmly riveted "till death them should part." The believer's union with Christ is liable to no such disastrous issues. Not that this consolatory doctrine dispenses with the necessity of a faithful, obedient, and devout course of effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life. The Divine idea of marriage is a united family, basing its bond of union on the unity of its parentage. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother," etc. True spiritual union with Christ involves an ascendency of affection. "If any man love father or mother more than Me," etc. In a deep sense it may be said of Christ and His disciple, "They twain are one Spirit." (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) **Thy land shall be married.**—"*Thy land shall be married*," *i. e.* it shall become fruitful again and be replenished. 1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity, and the interests of it, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it. Thy sons shall marry thee, *i. e.* they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee. When they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it (Jer. xxix. 5–7); but now they shall again marry their own land, "as a young man marrieth a virgin" that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands; when its princes marry their country, and resolve to take their lot with it. 2. Which is much better, her God shall betroth her to Himself in righteousness (Hos. ii. 19, 20). (*M. Henry.*) *Monopoly and communism:*—I propose to name some of the suitors who are claiming the hand of this Republic. 1. There is a greedy, all-grasping monster who comes in as suitor seeking the hand of this Republic, and that monster is known by the name of Monopoly. His sceptre is made out of the iron of the rail-track and the wire of telegraphy. He does everything for his own advantage and for the robbery of the people. Such monopolies imply an infinite acreage of wretchedness. Great monopolies in any land imply great privation. 2. Another suitor claiming the hand of this Republic is Nihilism. He owns nothing but a knife for universal blood-letting and a nitro-glycerine bomb for universal explosion. He believes in no God, no government, no heaven, and no hell, except what he can make on earth. He slew the Czar of Russia, killed Abraham Lincoln, and would put to death every king and president on earth, if he had the power. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. For as a young man marrieth a virgin.—*Fervid devotion to a cause:*—**It is difficult to see how any real parallel can exist between an intellectual interest or**

reasoned sense of duty to a public cause or institution, although prescribing exertion and even sacrifice, and the spontaneous, glowing, fervid devotion of a young man to his chosen bride. Say you so? Then let me say that as yet you know not some salient features of human nature. As a matter of fact abstractions, as we call them, do provoke passion; the passion of love and the passion of hate, no less truly than do concrete and visible objects. Millions of human beings have worked, suffered, fought and died for these very abstractions; for a political or social doctrine, for the fame of a fallen dynasty, for the credit of some secret club or association, for a country that has been crushed out of existence, for some wild undemonstrable theory, for some baseless or grotesque superstition, no less than for a true and soul-inspiring faith or principle. (*H. P. Liddon, D.D.*) *Practical devotion to the Church of Christ*:—Isaiah's comparison would suggest that the devotion of her sons to the city of God would have three characteristics. I. AN UNRESERVED, WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION; a devotion which bestows on its object its best and its all. "With my body I thee worship; and with all my worldly goods I thee endow," is the language not only of a Christian Church formulary, but of the human heart in its better mood, throughout all time; and it marks the first characteristic of that devotion to the Church of God which Isaiah saw in vision across the centuries. Undoubtedly a partial fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy may be recognized in the love and service which Israel after the flesh received from a long line of patriot children. Noblest among them were the Maccabees; but they were only samples of a spirit which was shared, in their day and afterwards, by thousands of their countrymen. That temper was indeed too often mingled with moral alloy that sullied its purity. But the men who saved their country from the cultured Paganism of Antiochus Epiphanes, and who even after the utter ruin of their sacred house by Titus, rose once and again to pour out their blood like water in an unavailing struggle with Imperial Rome at the epoch of its greatest military power, were assuredly not men only under the sway of a common or sordid motive. In their love to "Jerusalem the Holy," whose name was stamped upon their coins, they surely exhibit the careless self-abandonment of the passion which gives itself without stint to the object of its choice. The Lord had chosen Zion to be a habitation for Himself, and this choice made her, to those who had faith in it, the object of a passionate attachment in some respects without a parallel in history. Now, our Lord proclaimed and founded, within the Jewish nation, yet with a capacity and, indeed, an internal necessity of passing beyond its bounds, a new Society, which was to be more to the intellect and heart of man than the Greek πόλις, or the Roman World Empire, or the Jewish theocracy itself, ever had been or could be; yet which should sanction and satisfy, in ample measure, those instincts of union, brotherhood, improvement, order, of which earlier forms of association among men were the outcome and assertion. This Society, in virtue of its origin, its object, and its compass, He named the Kingdom of Heaven. Certain is it that the Church of Christ has inspired millions of Christians with mingled love and enthusiasm. If we believe that Christ's Church, though built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, has for the chief corner-stone, Himself; if we see in her, not a self-formed collection of individuals who agree in following Him, but, as Scripture says, His Body, instinct with His life; if for her He shed His most precious blood that He might present her glorious and immaculate in the realms of purity; then, in making much of her, we surely are doing no wrong to Him. Only because, notwithstanding the scars and stains which mark her sojourn here below, she is yet so intimately His, should she be so precious to His servants;—drawing the noblest souls into the highest paths of service. II. THE DEVOTION WHICH ISAIAH PREDICTS WILL BE DISINTERESTED. The true-hearted bridegroom marries, not that he may win rank or wealth, or public recognition, or any outward advantages whatever: he weds his bride for her own sake, because she is what she is, because in wedding her he finds the joy and satisfaction of his heart. It is "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health." So was it also to be with the espousals of the soul. The Holy Bride is wooed for her own sake, and not for anything that she may bestow on those who would win her. III. AND THE PROPHET'S COMPARISON SUGGESTS A DEVOTION THAT WILL LAST TILL DEATH. "Till death us do part." Weariness, impaired health, diminished opportunities for usefulness may come with years; but the tie of sacred service to the cause and Church of Christ can only end with life. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 6, 7. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem.—*The watchman's call*:—The prosperity of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which teaches the Gentile

world through Hebrew channels, depends on two conditions—watchfulness and prayer. To the latter of these subjects this discourse will be devoted. Let us dwell on importunity in prayer. "And give Him no rest." I. THIS IS A CALL TO THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN, and to a particular duty. Personal devotion will largely relate to matters affecting the individual and the family, but it must not stop there. The Christian must not forget that he is a member of the great Catholic Church, and must bear its burdens on his spirit to God in prayer. II. THE CHURCH ALSO MUST MEET ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS TO PRAY FOR A LARGER OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST. III. BY A FEW CONSIDERATIONS WE WILL ENDEAVOUR TO ENFORCE THE DUTY. 1. One is the fact that God has promised to meet us on the ground of earnest and constant prayer. 2. The history of importunate prayer is full of marvels. 3. If we survey the situation of the Church, and call to mind the responsibility which rests upon it, our own souls would be moved to greater earnestness. Precious souls are perishing around us; the Cross of Calvary, the love of God, the traditions of the Church, conscience, humanity, the judgment, heaven, hell, beseech us to rescue the perishing. There is but one power that will make the Church of Christ equal to every task which the Master has set before it—earnest prayer. 4. Importunate prayer ends in praise. Jerusalem will be established, and will become the praise—the glory—of the earth. 5. Although prayer in all its aspects is the inheritance of every Christian, yet every Christian is not a watchman. Therefore a word to Church leaders will be in place. Let them look round and survey the state of the Church. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The saints' importunity for Zion's prosperity:*—It is a truth which holds good both in Scripture and experience, that the care of Zion lies at the bottom of all God's powerful actings among the sons of men. All that He is and does, in the methods of His common and extraordinary providence, is for the sake of His Church, which is the principal cause and interest He has in the world. I. WHAT ARE THOSE SHAKINGS TO WHICH THE CAUSE AND CHURCH OF CHRIST ARE EXPOSED IN THE EARTH? 1. There are shakings to which the cause of Christ is exposed, which arise from outward violence (Ps. ii. 2). 2. There are shakings which arise from inward decays. A building will shake and totter, and grow ruinous, without any outward violence, if the foundation is undermined; or if the pins and fastenings, whereby it is held together, decay. This is the case—(1) When Gospel-truth is perverted or denied. (2) When Gospel-holiness is neglected. (3) When love is not cultivated. II. WHEN MAY GOD BE SAID SO TO ESTABLISH HIS CHURCH AS TO MAKE IT A PRAISE IN THE EARTH? To make up this praise and renown there are four or five things. As—1. Abundance of light and knowledge. 2. High degrees of holiness. 3. Abundance of peace (Ps. lxxii. 7). 4. A. multitude of converts. 5. A rich supply of all temporal good things. Men's natures shall be changed; their corrupt lusts and passions shall be subdued; and all their riches, honour, and power shall be employed for the support of Christ's cause and kingdom. III. THE DUTY OF SUCH AS MAKE ANY PROFESSION OF CHRIST WITH REFERENCE TO THIS GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY. "Ye that make," etc. 1. This day of Zion's establishment and praise should be uppermost in our thoughts. That which has no place in our thoughts and affections will have very little in our prayers. The Church of old deprecated this as an abominable sin; (Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6). 2. It should be continually in our prayers. 3. Prayer for Zion's establishment must be with a holy importunity and constancy. It is not the work of one day, but of every day; the blessing prayed for has every other blessing and mercy in the bowels of it. 4. Zion's friends are called to pray and work. The former branch of the verse commands action: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem." It is hypocrisy to ask in private what you would not be glad to do in public. Your time, gifts, substance and lives are God's. (*J. Hill.*) *Spiritual patriotism:*—We propose to put this illustration of Jewish patriotism into another frame. For in the New Testament Jerusalem stands metaphorically for the Church of Jesus Christ (Heb. xii. 22; Gal. ix. 26). The rebuilding of the Jewish capital will thus signify in Gospel speech the establishment of the Christian Church. I. A CALL TO SPIRITUAL PATRIOTISM. All through the second part of Isaiah Jerusalem is idealized, for Jerusalem, as the city actually was, presented small occasions for felicitation. But the Jerusalem "the Servant of the Lord" saw was the world's centre—the capital of all the nations! It was "the city of the Great King," and while the power and glory of other nations lay in their armies, their wealth, their population, their culture, the glory of Jerusalem was her religion. Now, what Jerusalem was to "the Servant of the Lord" the Christian Church is to the Christian; he is a fellow-citizen with the saints, bound, therefore, to be a spiritual

patriot. Only the Christian Church is not limited to one nation. Above all, the Church is a spiritual metropolis among the world powers, a heavenly fatherland on earthly soil, an eternal State established amidst temporal surroundings. Thus the love of a Jew for Jerusalem comes to represent the solicitude of a Christian for the Church. The Jew never forgot his fatherland. II. THE OUTCOME OF SPIRITUAL PATRIOTISM IN WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER. Patriotism is here set forth under two similes. 1. Spiritual patriots are to be sentinels. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem." The godly life is ever a campaign, and spiritual men are "men with an eye," as Carlyle phrases it. When others cry, "Peace, peace," it is often their painful duty to be nonconformists to a general delusion and to sound an alarm. And how great a result may be produced by the faithfulness of even one man! On a dark night in December 1602, when the inhabitants of Geneva, lulled by peaceful professions, slept, but never dreamed of danger, a daring attempt known in history as the "Escalade" was made by their foes. The Savoyards scaled the walls, and would have admitted their comrades but for the discharge of the musket of one of the sentries. He fell a martyr, but the crack of his piece brought the citizens from their beds, and the city was saved, while Beza, then eighty years of age, returned to God public thanksgiving, announcing the 124th Psalm for singing. There is work for our sentinels to-day. 2. But spiritual patriots are also "the Lord's remembrancers." The old State appointment is our illustration. In the Book of Esther the work of the remembrancer comes out in the chronicles which were read before the king on the occasion of his attack of insomnia; and the office, in a modified form, is known to us to-day in connection with our city councils. But there are elect souls who are the Lord's remembrancers. It may be that not every Christian has leisure of heart for this full consecration, for these remembrancers are such as make the progress of God's kingdom their prime solicitude. Eli could bear to hear of the ruin of his house in the death of his sons, but died on learning of the capture of God's ark. This is the highest style of patriotism. General Wolfe, in shattered health, led the handful of English that took Quebec from the French. Stricken down just as victory was assured, yet stimulated by the cry, "They run," he could just inquire who ran, and when told it was the French, forgetful of his own interests, he gasped, "I die happy," and closed his eyes. Shall spiritual patriots show less devotion? It is theirs to exercise unbounded faith in the Divine promises and to "call things that are not as though they were." The devout remembrance of the promises makes spiritual patriots "the Lord's remembrancers" —not that the Divine mind can ever present a blank, but that prayer ever means preparation for the fulfilment of the Divine pledge. Hence the strong point of the text lies in its emphasis of urgent and perpetual prayer. "Take ye no rest, and give Him no rest." This is the Old Testament anticipation of the parable of the importunate widow. When a lady appealed to the great Protector for the release of her husband, Cromwell preserved a stolid demeanour so long as the wife confined herself to the proprieties of measured speech, but directly she burst into tears her plea was granted. Prayer is the wireless telegraphy which unites heaven and earth; if only each heart be a "receiver" it shall never lack a message from on high, and there is always a great "receiver" there in the heart of our God. III. FOR THE TRIUMPH OF THIS SPIRITUAL PATRIOTISM "THE SERVANT OF THE LORD" RENDERS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE. The prayers of the Church and the purpose of Jesus Christ run in parallel lines when the prayer-spirit is deep and real; or better, our prayer and His purpose are two streams that run into one channel with united force. True prayer is not the attempt to wring benediction from an unwilling hand. God is not in danger of forgetting His pledges; only His pledges can scarcely take effect in spiritual benediction till the Church is ready to claim her own. There are millions of money in Chancery with no one to claim it; there is boundless grace in God waiting to be appropriated by man. While our prayers co-operate with God's purpose never may we forget that all real prayer has its origin in God: it is the Divine purpose struggling for expression in the human heart. This brings us to our point of rest. "The Servant of the Lord" has rendered Himself responsible for His Church. The proof lies in His Cross, in His intercession, in the wonderful providence by which His Church has been preserved from extinction all along the ages, notwithstanding that she has lived all the while in the midst of foes. While we leave the responsibility of final issues with our Lord, we may share the glory and the joy of being "workers together" with Him. How clearly this comes out in this connection! "For Zion's sake," says He, "will I not hold my peace." "I have set watchmen upon thy walls . . . they shall

never hold their peace." "I will not rest." "Take ye no rest." The Christ-spirit is thus the Christian spirit; the work of Christ is continued by His Church. Now look at the magnificent result anticipated! The Church is to become God's city of light (ver. 1). The ideal is developed in the Revelation (xxi. 23, 24). Whatever light stands for, whether revelation, or brightness, or beauty, or safety, or purity, all these are to find their home and sphere in Christ's Church. The Church of Christ is to be first a guiding light to men—but afterwards she is to be as a sunrise to the nations (Isa. ix. 2). For the Church is to be at once the expositor of God's righteousness and the channel of God's salvation. (*J. T. Briscoe.*) *No rest for God or His people:*—In its present position, Jerusalem is at once a witness for God and a type of man—a witness to God's truth and justice, and a type of man's sin and sorrow. Prayer to God is enjoined as a means to secure the renovation and blessing of the temporal Jerusalem; and prayer is still one of the mightiest forces which can be brought to bear on the waste places and ruined magnificence of man's spiritual nature. I. A CHARACTER WE MUST ENDEAVOUR TO DESERVE. The prophet describes God's servants as those who "make mention of the Lord," or, in other words, are "the Lord's remembrancers." Not that they had need to remind Him of their needs or His fulness, but that their business was to bring Him to the remembrance of those about them. II. If we are thus to be the Lord's remembrancers THERE IS A DANGER WE MUST SEEK TO AVOID. This is, the danger of keeping silence, of withholding our testimony, or giving it half-heartedly and in a perfunctory manner. There are not a few roads which end at this habitation of "silence." 1. Doubt. 2. Despair, whether it be despair of ourselves or of others. Hopefulness is as necessary as faithfulness. 3. We shall "keep silence" if we grow weary in well-doing; if patience gives place to fretfulness, and love of ease cries out against the practice of self-denial; if the crown is longed for while the cross is shunned, and the reaping is desired while the sowing is neglected. III. In connection with all this, THERE IS A DUTY WE MUST FAITHFULLY PERFORM. "Give Him no rest." No rest for the servant, and no rest for the Master. Surely this means: "Be earnest in supplication." IV. A RESULT IN WHICH WE MUST STEADFASTLY BELIEVE. We are to be "remembrancers" and "pleaders" till He establish, and "till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." That He will do these great things we are devoutly to believe; that He may do them we are earnestly to pray. The early verses of our chapter draw a picture already seen by the prophetic eye. Righteousness, bright as the light going forth with salvation, clear as the burning lamp. The new name given to betoken the new nature. The joy of wedding festivity celebrating the union of the once forsaken city with her new-found Lord and King. Glowing picture this; yet to be fully realized in the capital of the Holy Land, and yet to be spiritually realized in the fulness of blessing which shall crown all faithful labour, and be the answer to every earnest prayer. (*W. J. Mayers.*) *The Lord's remembrancers* (R.V.):—It is hardly possible not to linger a little over this curious appellation, "the Lord's remembrancers," given in the margin of the Authorised Version, and in the text of the Revised. Several interpretations of it have been suggested. The original word itself has both the ordinary meaning of one who reminds another, and a technical meaning (2 Sam. xx. 24) akin to, though not identical with, that of the English word. By some it is applied to the angels, who are also supposed to be the "watchmen" upon the walls, referred to in the preceding clause. But such an explanation lifts the passage entirely out of the sphere of human privilege and duty, and introduces into it allusions to matters about which very little is known. There may be in it a special reference to prophets, whose functions would naturally include that of leading the people in their supplications to God, as well as that of warning them of danger and inciting them to effort. But there is no need to confine the term to officials of any kind. The entire New Testament is a sufficient authority for applying it to all true Christians. If, indeed, there be truth in the tradition, in Judaism itself it was recognized in part of the sacrificial ritual that every man could be and ought to be the Lord's remembrancer. Psalm xliv. describes some of the marvellous things done by Jehovah for Israel in the past, and the forsaken and oppressed condition of Israel in the present; and one of its closing verses is said to have been regularly sung for long in the temple worship—the one in which Jehovah's remembrancers, after having reminded Him of their need and of His promised help, call upon Him: "Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever." John Hyrcanus is reputed to have abolished this custom, in spleen at the refusal of the Pharisees to let him reign in peace, or possibly, according to a more charitable conjecture, under

the feeling that the idea of awakening and reminding Jehovah involves a defect of faith. The psalm, however, is entirely true to human nature. For when men are tempted to imagine themselves forsaken of God and begirt inextricably by perils, it is an immense stimulus and encouragement of faith to remind God of their needs and of His promises, of their present reliance upon Him, and even (for Scripture warrants it elsewhere) of the way in which His faithfulness and honour are concerned in their protection and deliverance. Jacob prayed in that way when he trembled at the thought of his brother's probable rage, pleading God's actual words of promise: "O God of my fathers, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: . . . Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother: . . . for (again) Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea." Two remembrancings, and between them a little prayer; and of course the result was that, when Esau came, instead of pouring his rough followers upon the struggling and indefensible caravan, he fell on his brother's "neck and kissed him." David was surprised and almost staggered in unbelief at the prospect of greatness and renown which the prophet Nathan opened up to him, but he recovered and fed his faith by reminding himself and his God of the promise, and prayed, "Now, O Lord God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as Thou hast said." In this very prophecy Israel first of all reminds Jehovah of what He has been wont to do, and what needs to be done now: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old." The result is seen in vision at once: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion;" and so all the watchmen lift up their voices: "Break forth unto joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem: the Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." We shall never suffer much prolonged doubt as to our own establishment or the Church's, if we will only duly remember and exercise our high vocation, to remind God of our perils and needs and of His promised grace and help. (*R. W. Moss.*) "*Watchers*":—Not watchmen (lit. "lookers out") as in chaps. lii. 8, lvi. 10, but as in chap. xxi. 11; Cant. v. 7, lit. "keepers," those who guard the city, especially during the night. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Three kinds of ministers*:—The ministers of the temple of truth, it has been said, are of three kinds: first, those stationed at the gate of the temple to constrain the passers-by to come in; secondly, those whose function is to accompany inside all who have been persuaded to enter, and display and explain to them the treasures and secrets of the place; and, thirdly, those whose duty is to patrol round the temple, keeping watch and ward and defending the shrine from the attacks of enemies. We are only speaking very roughly if we say that the first of these three functions is that of the Preacher, the second that of the Teacher, and the third that of the Controversialist. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Go through, go through the gates.**—*The conversion of the Jews*:—I. THE GLORIOUS EVENT TO BE PROCLAIMED (ver. 11). When the Divine Spirit would attract special attention to any subject, He prefixes "Behold" to the truth revealed. We have here "Behold" thrice repeated. 1. The nature of the event. "Thy salvation cometh." "Thy salvation" is rendered by the ancient versions (Syriac, Arabic, LXX, Chaldee, Vulgate) and the best modern interpreters, "Thy Saviour;" and from the words, "His reward is with Him," it is clear that this is the intended meaning of the prophet. The glowing promises of our text, and the prophecies connected with it, were most manifestly never fulfilled at His first coming. The second coming of Christ as the Deliverer of His people Israel is then the event here foretold; an event yet before the Church (Rom. xi. 26, 27). It is not enough to proclaim Christ crucified to the Jews; we must also proclaim the once crucified Immanuel speedily to appear in glory, to punish His rebellious subjects, and to save His people. 2. The things connected with this event. "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." It is not quite clear whether "His reward" refers to the reward which Christ receives or which He bestows. Our Lord is to "see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied," and He is to be "glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." But I apprehend that the reward which He bestows is here intended (Rev. xxii. 12). He has also a "work" to perform. What that work is, we may learn from the following chapters. It comprehends, doubtless, a lengthened series of events. Notice these three—the overthrow of His

enemies; the mercies in store for Israel; the establishment of His kingdom. 3. Its required proclamation. By "the daughter of Zion" is meant the Jewish nation. It is a solemnly announced command to all to tell the Jews of the coming Saviour. But why should the Lord tell the ends of the world to care for Zion? He foresaw and foreordained that the Jews should be scattered everywhere, that there might not be a spot upon the earth uninterested in or unmoved by their return. It was always the duty of Christians to preach the Gospel "to the Jew first," and then to the Gentile. II. THE BLESSED RESULT OF THIS EVENT TO THE JEWS (ver. 12). The words apparently lead us to two classes of persons to be blessed at our Saviour's coming. 1. "They shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord;" 2. "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." There may be a reference in the first class to the converted Gentiles (Justin Martyr), and in the second to the converted Jews. Through the chapter these are combined, while the Jews are addressed by the personal pronoun (ver. 2). In this view, our text would contain a delightful reciprocation of congratulation between Jews and Gentiles. Yet, as the leading subject of the chapter is the restoration of the Jews, and as, in the preceding verse, the ends of the world are to be addressed on the subject, it is rather probable that the word "they" may here refer to the admiring nations of the earth. They shall call them, *i. e.* the Jews, the "holy" or consecrated people, "the redeemed of the Lord;" and then the prophet himself, as if beholding Jerusalem thus glorious, changes the person and number of his language, and in the rapture of exultation exclaims, "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." III. THE DUTIES TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED (ver. 10). Here the inhabitants of cities, wherever the Jews may be, are called to prepare roads for their return to their own land, that they and the nations at large may be ready to receive and welcome the great Lord and King of the whole earth. The general direction is to prepare the Jews, and thus also the Gentiles, for the coming Saviour. 1. Indifference is to be cast off. "Go through, go through the gates." The double direction shows the ardour of the Divine mind, the importance of the duty, how dull Christians in general would be to it, and how needful to rouse them by repeated exhortations. 2. A way is to be prepared. "Prepare ye the way of the people," etc. 3. A standard is also to be lifted up for the nations. "Lift up a standard for the people." This is added not only as a duty to be discharged, but as a great encouragement to fulfil duties to the Jews, by the blessed effect it will undoubtedly have upon all nations. The meaning of this standard will be more clear by referring to chap. xi. 10–12. A standard is a token of war: it is to assemble, direct and encourage the army, and to animate them in proceeding against their enemies. To lift up this standard is to preach the Gospel. But for whom is this standard to be lifted up? "For the people." The original is in the plural number, "for the peoples," and it is by the best translators rendered, "the nations." The restoration of the Jews, then, is a part of the Divine plan for attracting the attention of and for blessing the whole world. (*E. Bickersteth.*)

Gather out the stones.—*Clearing the road to heaven:*—I. ENDEAVOUR TO REMOVE SOME OF THE STUMBLING-BLOCKS OUT OF THE POOR BEGINNER'S WAY. 1. Let us begin with a very old and common difficulty, the doctrine of election. Many will say, "Perhaps I am not one of God's chosen." I know not any better way of practically treating the matter than of saying, "I will go to Jesus because He bids me." When you are ill you do not know whether you are ordained to get well, but you send for the doctor; you cannot tell whether you are predestined to be rich, but you endeavour to make money; you do not know whether you will live through the day, but you work to provide yourself with bread; thus common-sense cuts the knot which mere theory can never untie. Leave the subtleties of argument alone, and act as sensible men. Go to Jesus and try whether He will reject you. 2. A deep sense of sin. If there had not been great sin, there would not have been need of a great Saviour. 3. A fear that the day of grace has passed. The Lord's grace can come to a man at any time, and at any hour. 4. A tendency to blasphemous thoughts. They should lead you to go and tell Jesus Christ about it, but they should not drive you to despair. 5. The absence of anything like a horrible thought, or a terror, or an alarm. If you are allowed to come to Jesus without being so molested by the Evil One, do not fret about that, but rather rejoice. There is no need to go round by hell's gate to get to heaven. 6. A want of sensibility with regard to their sins. A man is saved by having his heart broken, and being led to cast himself upon Jesus; and if you have not yet received this part of salvation, your business is to come to Jesus for it, not to stay away till you get it of yourself, and then come to Christ with your feelings as a recommendation. 7. "I cannot

believe." The smallest grain of saving faith will save a man. It is the object of faith we should look to. 8. "I do not think I can be saved, because I am not like so-and-so." Do be content to have nothing good in yourself, and to be nothing good, and to take all your good from Jesus Christ. 9. "I never have any joy and peace." You shall receive the joy when you exercise the faith. II. POINT YOU TO HIM WHO IS "THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE," who has already cleared the stumbling-blocks out of the way. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world.**—*Who is this?* (with chap. lxiii. 1):—As in God's immediate dealings with men we usually see the Son of God most manifest, this passage may fitly represent the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ whenever He has come forth to vindicate the cause of His people and to overthrow their enemies. This vision will be astoundingly fulfilled in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fourteenth and nineteenth chapters of the Book of Revelation give us parallel passages to this. The scene before us describes an interposition of the Messiah; the return of the Divinely-appointed Champion from the defeat of His enemies. As it is evidently a picture of salvation rather than of damnation; as the main feature in it is that He is mighty to save; as the great and chief element of the whole thing is that the year of His redeemed is come, and that the Warrior's own arm has brought salvation to His people; I cannot question that this text is applicable to the first coming of Christ. Then He did battle with the hosts of sin and death and hell, and so vanquished them that in His resurrection He returned with the keys of death and hell at His girdle. Then was He seen as "mighty to save." I. THERE IS A PROCLAMATION (vers. 11, 12). The commentators as a whole can see no connection between the sixty-third chapter and the preceding part of the Book of Isaiah; but surely that connection is plain enough to the common reader. In these verses the coming of the Saviour is proclaimed, and in the next chapter that coming is seen in vision, and the evangelical prophet beholds the Saviour so vividly that he is startled, and inquires, "Who is this?" 1. This great announcement tells you that there is a salvation from without. Within your heart there is nothing that can save you. The proclamation is, "Behold, thy salvation cometh." It comes from a source beyond yourself. 2. It is a salvation which comes through a person. "Thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." The great salvation which we have to proclaim is salvation by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 3. This salvation leads to holiness; for the text says of those who receive the Saviour, "They shall call them, The holy people." 4. It is salvation by redemption; for it is written that they shall be called "The redeemed of the Lord." In the sacred Scriptures there is no salvation for men except by redemption. 5. This salvation is complete. "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." See the beginning of it: "Sought out." See the end of it: "Not forsaken." You will not begin with God, but God will begin with you. You shall be sought out, and then you will seek Him. He seeks you even now. But suppose the Lord found you, and then left you; you would perish after all. But it shall not be so; for the same Lord who calls you "Sought out" also calls you "Not forsaken." You shall never be forsaken of the grace of God, nor of the God of grace. II. CONSIDER THE QUESTION, "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" The prophet beholds in vision the Captain of salvation, returning from battle, arrayed like the warriors of whom we read, "the valiant men are in scarlet." He beholds the majestic march of this mighty Conqueror, and he cries, "Who is this?" When a soul first hears the proclamation of God's salvation, and then sees Jesus coming to him, he says, "Who is this?" 1. The question in part arises from anxiety, as if he said, "Who is this that espouses my cause? Is He able to save?" 2. The question also indicates ignorance. We do not any of us know our Lord Jesus to the full yet. "Who is this?" is a question we may still put to the sacred oracle. Paul, after he had known Christ fifteen years, yet desired that he might know Him; for His love passeth knowledge. 3. As the sinner looks, and looks again, he cries, "Who is this?" in delighted amazement. Is it indeed the Son of God? Does He intervene to save me? The God whom I offended, does He stoop to fight and rout my sins? It is even He. 4. I think the question is asked, also, by way of adoration. As the soul begins to see Jesus, its anxiety is removed by knowledge, and is replaced by an astonishment which ripens into worship. 5. It appears from the question that the person asking it knows whence the Conqueror came; for it is written, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Yes, our Redeemer has returned from death, as said the Psalmist, "Thou

wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." 6. Next notice that the prophet in vision observes the colour of the Conqueror's garments. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Red is not Christ's colour; hence the question arises, "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?" Our beloved's garments are whiter than any fuller can make them. The glory of His purity is such that we say to ourselves, "Red, why, that is the colour of Edom, the adversary! Red, that is the colour of the earth of our manhood! Red is the colour of our scarlet sins." Why is He red? Although the text treats of the blood of His adversaries, yet I would have you devoutly think of our Lord literally as shedding His own blood, for His victory was thus accomplished. The text sets forth the result of that blood-shedding in the overthrow of His enemies and ours; but we cannot separate the effect from the cause. I remember how Rutherford seems to glow and burn when in his prose poetry he talks of "the bonnie red man." 7. But yet the question comes from one who perceives that the Conqueror is royally arrayed. "This that is glorious in His apparel." The Jesus we have to preach to you is no mean Saviour; He is clothed with glory and honour because of the suffering of death. 8. The question ends with "travelling in the greatness of His strength." He did not come back from slaughtering our enemies feeble and wounded, but He returned in majestic march, like a victor who would have all men know that his force is irresistible. The earth shook beneath our Lord's feet on the resurrection morning, for "there was a great earthquake." The Roman guards became as dead men at His appearing. The Lord Jesus Christ is no petty, puny Saviour. As He travels through the nations it is as a strong man against whom none can stand, mighty to rescue every soul that puts its trust in Him. III. CONSIDER THE ANSWER. No one can answer for Jesus: He must speak for Himself. Like the sun, He can only be seen by His own light. He is His own interpreter. Not even the angels could explain the Saviour: they get no further than desiring to look into the things which are in Him. He himself answers the question "Who is this?" The answer which our Lord gives is twofold. He describes Himself—1. As a Speaker: "I that speak in righteousness." Is He not the Word? Every word that Christ speaks is true. The Gospel which He proclaims is a just and righteous one, meeting both the claims of God and the demands of conscience. 2. Our Lord also describes Himself as a Saviour. "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Observe that the word "mighty" is joined with His saving, and not with his destroying. Conclusion: Hearken to the proclamation, "Behold, thy salvation cometh." Jesus can save you, for He is "mighty to save"! He has saved others like you. He can overthrow all your enemies. He can do this alone. He is able to save you now. It is a sad wonder that men do not believe in Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **Thou shalt be called, Sought out.**—"*Sought out*":—1. The first meaning of our text is very clear. Here is a prophecy, that as Jerusalem, having been despoiled her beauty by her enemies, was for a long time forsaken and worthy to be called, "A city which no man seeketh after," so, in a brighter day, her glory shall return, she shall be an attraction to all lands, and the joy of the whole earth; multitudes of willing pilgrims shall seek her out that they may behold her beauty. She shall be a city greatly set by and greatly sought out by those who love the hallowed spots where the mighty deeds of the Lord were wrought, and the arm of Jehovah made bare. 2. The text, doubtless, has a similar reference to the Church of God. During many centuries the Church of Christ was hidden—a thing obscure, despised, unknown, abhorred; she concealed herself in the catacombs; her followers were the poorest and most illiterate of men, proscribed by cruel laws, and hunted by ferocious foes. Although the royal bride of Christ, and destined to be the ruler of nations, she made no figure in the world's eye; she was but a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands. But the day is already come in which multitudes seek the Church of Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Am I sought out?*—In a fuller and more spiritual sense the Church of God may well be called "Sought out"; and the like title may truthfully be applied to every single member of that dearly-loved and dearly-purchased family. I. THE NATURAL CONDITION IMPLIED IN THE TITLE, "SOUGHT OUT." 1. If the Church of God has been "sought out," then it is clear enough that originally it was lost. 2. We were so lost that we did not seek the Lord. 3. As we had no thought of coming to God, so we never should have willed to return. 4. So far from seeking God, we did not desire Him to seek us. 5. Our being sought out, considering our condition, was one of the greatest wonders ever known or heard

of. I have heard this expressed in words occasionally; when a man has come to join the Church, he has said to me, "If any one had told me six months ago that I should make a profession of being a follower of Christ, I would have knocked him down." And yet the thing did occur. II. WE HAVE SURPASSING GRACE REVEALED. This grace lies in several particulars. 1. That they were sought out at all. It is very wonderful grace on the part of God that He should plan a way of salvation; but there is something more gracious than this generous summons. One would have supposed that after the invitation had been freely given and the preparation for the feast had been generously made, the Lord would leave men to come or not as they willed. 2. But this grace appears even more conspicuous if you consider the persons sought out. That any should be sought out is matchless grace, but that we should be sought is grace beyond degree. 3. Nor must I fail to bring to your recollection, that the surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that we were sought "out." The word "out" conveys a mass of meaning. Men go and seek for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house, but in such a case there is only seeking, not seeking out. The loss is more perplexing, and the search more persevering, when a thing is sought out. We were mingled with the mire; we were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer, and men have to gather out and carefully inspect a heap of abominable filth, to turn it over, and over, and over, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the thing is found. Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth; we wandered hither and thither, and when ministering mercy came after us, it did not find us at the first coming; it had to go to the right hand and to the left, and search hither and thither, and everywhere, to seek us out, for we were so desperately lost, and had got into such a strange position, that it did not seem possible that ever grace could come to us. And yet we were sought out! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us, we were found. The lives of some of God's people, if they could be written, would make you marvel. The romance of Divine grace is infinitely more interesting than the romance of imagination. 4. The grace of God is illustrious in the Divine Agent by whom we are sought out. It was not the minister; he might have sought thee year after year, and never have found thee. Thy tearful mother, with her many prayers, would have missed thee. Thine anxious father, with his yearning bowels of compassion, would never have discovered thee. Those providences, which like great nets were seeking to entangle thee, would all have been broken by thy strong dashings after evil. Who was it sought thee out? None other than Himself. The Great Shepherd could not trust His under-shepherds; He must Himself come, and oh! if it had not been for those eyes of omniscience, He never would have seen thee; He never would have read thy history and known thy case: if it had not been for those arms of omnipotence, He never could have grasped thee; He never could have thrown thee on His shoulders and brought thee home rejoicing. 5. Remember that the glory of it is that we were sought out effectually. We are a people not sought out and then missed at the last. III. THE DISTINGUISHING TITLE JUSTIFIED. How were we sought out? Let us justify the name. 1. We are sought out in the eternal purposes and the work of Christ. 2. This seeking out, as far as we know it, began by gracious words of mercy. A godly mother told us the truth with weeping, a holy father set us a good example; we were sought out by that little Bible we were taught to read, and that hymn-book which was put into our hands. We were sought out when we were taken to the house of God. We were sought out while the preacher called the Sabbath-breaker, the hard-hearted, the hypocrite, the formalist, the abandoned, the profane. According to our case we felt that he was calling us, and the eyes of Jesus were looking on us, and His voice was bidding us repent and live. 3. Afflictions sought us out. The fever hunted us to the Cross. When the cholera came, it carried a great whip in its hand to flog us to the Saviour. We had serious losses, a decaying business, all which should have weaned us from the world. Our friends sickened; from their graves we heard the voice of invitation, "Come unto Christ and live." We were disappointed in some of our fondest hopes, and our heart, riven for the time, yearned after a higher life and a deeper satisfaction. 4. Then came mysterious visitations. It was in the night season when all was still, we sat up in our bed, and solemn thoughts passed through us; the preacher's words which we had heard years ago came back fresh as when we heard them for the first time; old texts of Scripture, the recollection of a mother's tears, all these came upon us. Or it was in the midst of business, and we did not know how it was, but suddenly a deep calm came over us. 5. But after all, these visitations, these providences, these preachings, and so on, would all have been nothing, if it had not

been for the appointed time when the Holy Spirit came and sought us out. IV. A SPECIAL DUTY INCUMBENT UPON THOSE WHO WEAR THE TITLE, "SOUGHT OUT." If it be really so that you are such debtors to Divine seeking, ought you not to spend your whole lifetime in seeking others out? We are not to preach merely to those who come to listen. Let us hunt for souls by visitation. Where all other means fail, seek men by your prayers. As long as a man has one other man to pray for him, there is a hope of his salvation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **A city not forsaken.**—"*A city not forsaken*":—1. A forsaken city! What a picture it presents. Streets once crowded with life, left desolate. Halls once ablaze with light—darkened. Every voice of music hushed, every dancer gone. No man of wisdom to advise. No soldier to defend. No peopled homes. No schools with children. No trade. No port. No active work for God or man. A city forsaken! Bereft, indeed! 2. But "A city not forsaken"! How different! with its crowded streets; its marts of trade; its palace of legislature; its courts of administration and justice; its glory of magnificent architecture; its busy river; its turrets ablaze with the glory of their gold; its towers of strength; its bulwarks of defence; its processions of royalty; its merchants; its scholars; its citizens, good, bad and indifferent; its sanctuaries; its slums; its manifold life and stir. Ay, verily, "a city not forsaken" is a place of interest and power; a place to live in; where the pulse beats; where men feel the blessings of community, and find the possibilities of success; where trade has its markets; where intellect is sharpened, and where extremes meet—the place of the temple, the arena, the theatre, the gymnasium, and the forum. (*C. H. Kelly.*) *The Church "a city not forsaken"*:—The text is uttered respecting the Church of the Lord, and is true of every part of that Church. It is descriptive. It is historic. It is prophetic. (*Ibid.*) *The presence of God in His Church*:—If it was the delight of the ancient Jews to know that the Lord was in His temple in Jerusalem, it is also ours to know that He is with us. 1. His Church abounds in splendour; in numbers; in wealth; in structures. She is rich in schools and universities. Her sons are among the greatest scholars; the bravest soldiers; the most eloquent speakers. She is like the King's daughter, arrayed in costly attire, and all beautiful within, having external adornment and internal excellence; but what of all that, if that were all? What if she were forsaken of God? if there were no shout of the King in the camp? 2. But there is the presence of God—the Father in His family; the Captain with His hosts; the King in His city. 3. Having this truth, how rich is the Church of God! It involves the heritage of power, wisdom, love. 4. We will rejoice because, having God in the city, the commonwealth is safe; truth will be victorious; vice will be curbed; crime will cease; ignorance will be instructed; men and women will be saved; children will be nurtured and trained aright; true spiritual religion, as contrasted with mere conventional Churchism, will prevail; the love of worldliness will give place to spirituality of life; there will be honesty instead of theft; truthfulness instead of lies; purity instead of wickedness; holiness instead of mere professional Church membership. (*Ibid.*) *The Church, "a city not forsaken" by its own people*:—1. Its numbers are larger to-day than ever. They help to constitute its wealth, to make it full of power; they make its defence stronger than walls of brick and stone; mightier than ramparts. The fellowship of believers; the communion of saints; the brotherhood of Christians is very real. It is found in this city—this Church of God. It is illustrated in the lives of myriads who dedicate their intellect, their love, to it. Verily, this city is not forsaken. Its dwellings are peopled. Its population increases. 2. And more are coming. One day Henry Clay stood on a peak on the Alleghany Mountains, with arms folded, and as though looking into the distance far beyond. Some one said to the rapt thinker, "Mr. Clay, what are you thinking about?" He replied, "I am listening to the ontramping of the feet of future generations of Americans." He knew they would come. So we. We rejoice in the millions of our city. But yet there is room. They come. They will continue to come. This is no forsaken spot. It never will be. Desolation does not belong to this Zion. 3. There are good reasons for its sons not forsaking it. In it they have found salvation. In it they have been made joyful. When they were pursued and troubled, it opened its gates to them, and gave them refuge and safety. The walls which surround it can never be broken through by any foe; for God is the strength of those walls, and every citizen is absolutely safe. (*Ibid.*) *Backsliders*:—But have not any forsaken this city? The answer is, to their own sad sorrow, Yes! At this hour there are sheep that have strayed; prodigals that have wandered; backsliders that have fallen. They have forsaken purity; they have turned their backs on God. What has the City herald to proclaim to such? What is the message of

the King? The proclamation is mercy; amnesty; full forgiveness. The message of the King is, Return. Will you come? The gates of the city are open: Will you enter? You have forsaken the Church; but God has not forsaken you. But, so far as you are concerned, the gates of the city will soon be closed. Take care that you are on the right side. One of our ministers said that one evening, after a day's excursion, he and his party were about to enter an Eastern city. They saw a horseman approach at a gallop. Our friend asked, "Why does he ride so fast?" "Because," said the guide, "he knows that in a few moments it will be sunset, and the city gate will be closed; and, if he is not in before that, he will be too late, and must remain outside in the dark." It is nearly sunset with some of you who have forsaken the city; soon the gate will be closed; be quick and enter in! (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER LXIII.

VERS. 1–6. **Who is this that cometh from Edom?**—*Jehovah's triumph over His people's foes:*—A passage of unique and sublime dramatic power. The impotence of Israel's enemies to retard or interfere with their deliverance has been insisted on before (chaps. xli. 15 f., xlix. 25, 26, li. 23, liv. 17); and it is here developed under a novel and striking figure. The historical fact upon which the representation rests is the long-standing and implacable enmity subsisting between Israel and Edom. The scene depicted is, of course, no event of actual history; it is symbolical; an ideal humiliation of nations, marshalled upon the territory of Israel's inveterate foe, is the form under which the thought of Israel's triumph is here expressed. The prophet sees in imagination a figure, as of a conqueror, his garments crimsoned with blood, advancing proudly in the distance from the direction of Edom, and asks, "Who is this that cometh?" etc. In reply, he hears from afar the words, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save," *i. e.* I who have announced (chap. xlv. 19) a just and righteous purpose of deliverance, and am able to give it effect. The answer is not yet sufficiently explicit, so he repeats the question in a more direct form, "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?" etc. (vers. 2, 3). Not Edom only, then, but other nations also have been trodden down and subdued (vers. 4–6). In the hour when the contest *Israel contra mundum* was to be decided, no human agent, willingly or consciously, came forward to assist; nevertheless, God's purposes were not frustrated: Israel's opponents were humbled and defeated; but human means, in so far as use was made of them, were the unconscious instruments of Providence. And thus the blood-stained colour of the Victor's garments is explained: it is a token of Jehovah's triumph over His people's foes, primarily, indeed, over those foes who would impede the release of the Jews from Babylon, or molest them when settled again in Palestine, but by implication also, over other foes who might rise up in the future to assail the people of God. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The Saviour—God of Israel:*—The image presented is one of the most impressive and awe-inspiring in the Old Testament, and it is difficult to say which is most to be admired, the dramatic vividness of the vision, or the reticence which conceals the actual work of slaughter and concentrates the attention on the Divine Hero as He emerges victorious from the conflict. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Who is the Hero?*—It was a serious misapprehension of the spirit of the prophecy which led many of the Fathers to apply it to the passion and death of Christ. Although certain phrases, detached from their context, may suggest that interpretation to a Christian reader, there can be no doubt that the scene depicted is a "drama of Divine vengeance" (G. A. Smith), into which the idea of propitiation does not enter. The solitary Figure who speaks in vers. 3–6 is not the servant of the Lord, or the Messiah, but Jehovah Himself (comp. the parallel, chap. lix. 16); the blood which reddens His garments is expressly said to be that of His enemies; and the "winepress" is no emblem of the spiritual sufferings endured by our Lord, but of the "fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. xix. 15) towards the adversaries of His Kingdom. While it is true that the judgment is the prelude to the redemption of Israel, the passage before us exhibits only the judicial aspect of the Divine dealings, and it is not permissible to soften the terrors of the picture by introducing soteriological conceptions which lie beyond its scope. (*Ibid.*) *The Conqueror from Edom:*—What

does it mean—the prophetic Genius waiting, watching, and questioning; the mighty stranger coming fresh from victorious battle, with the robe red as if with the stain of grapes, coming up from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Edom, remember, was the country where the Israelites' most inveterate enemies lived. No other nation pressed on them so constantly or gave them such continual trouble as the Edomites. And Bozrah was the capital city of Edom, the centre of its power. When the conqueror comes from Edom, then, and finds Israel anxious and eager upon the mountain, and shows her his stained robe in sign of the struggle which he has gone through, and then tells her that the victory is complete, that because he saw that she had no defender he has undertaken her defence and trodden Edom under foot for her, we can understand something of the power and comfort of such a poetic vision to the Hebrew's heart. There may have been some special event which it commemorated. Some special danger may have threatened on the side of the tumultuous Edomites, and some special unexpected deliverer may have appeared who saved the country, and was honoured by this song of praise. But every such special deliverance to the deep religious and patriotic feeling of the Jew had a much wider meaning. Every partial mercy to his nation always pointed to the one great mercy which was to embrace all others, to the coming of the Messiah, whose advent was to be the source of every good, and the cure of every evil. And so these words of Isaiah mount to a higher strain than any that could have greeted an Israelite warrior who might have made a successful incursion into Edomite soil. The prophet is singing of the victorious Messiah. This Hebrew Messiah has come, and is more than the Hebrew Messiah: He is the Christian's Christ, He is our Saviour. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Christ's struggle and triumph:*—Very often now this sounds strange and incomprehensible; this absorption of every struggle between the good and the evil that is going on in the world into the one great struggle of the life and death of Jesus Christ; but it follows necessarily from any such full idea as we Christians hold of what Jesus Christ is and of what brought Him to this world. If He be really the Son of God, bringing in an utterly new way the power of God to bear on human life; if He be the natural Creator-King of humanity, come for the salvation of humanity; then it would seem to follow that the work of salvation must be His, and His alone: and if we see the process of salvation, the struggle of the good against the evil, going on all over the world, we shall be ready still to feel that it is all under His auspices and guidance; that the effort of any benighted soul in any darkest heathen land to get away from its sins, and cast itself upon an assured mercy of its God, is part of His great work, is to the full intelligent faith of the well-taught Christian believer just what the struggle of a blind plant underground to reach the surface is to the free aspiration of the oak-tree, which in the full glory of the sunlight reaches out its eager branches toward the glorious sun—a result of the same power, and a contribution to the same victorious success. All forces strive after simplicity and unity. Operations in nature, in mechanics, in chemistry, which men have long treated as going on under a variety of powers, are gradually showing themselves to be the fruits of one great mightier power, which in many various forms of application is able to produce them all. This is the most beautiful development of our modern science. The Christian belief in Christ holds the same thing of the spiritual world, and unites all partial victories everywhere into one great victory which is the triumph of its Lord. On no other ground can Christianity stand with its exclusive claims, and Christianity is in its very nature exclusive. In the susceptibility of all men to the same influences of the highest sort, there comes out the only valuable proof of the unity of the human race, I think. Demonstrate what you may about the diversity of origin or structure of humanity, so long as the soul capable of the great human struggle and the great human helps is in every man, the human race is one. On the other hand, demonstrate as perfectly as you will the identity of origin and structure of all humanity, yet if you find men so spiritually different in two hemispheres that the same largest obligations do not impress and the same largest loves do not soften them, what does your unity of the human race amount to? Here, it seems to me, Christ, in His broad appeal to all men of all races, is the true asserter of the only valuable human unity. If this be so, then wherever there is good at work in the world, we Christians may see the progress of the struggle, and rejoice already in the victory of Christ. (*Ibid.*) *The method of Christ's salvation:*—Let us go on and look, as far as we may, into the method of this salvation; first, for the world at large, and then for the single soul. And in both let us follow the story of the old Jewish vision. "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" Sin hangs on the borders of goodness everywhere, as just across the narrow Jordan valley Edom always lay

threateningly upon the skirts of Palestine. How terribly constant it was! How it kept the people on a strain all the while! The moment that a Jew stepped across the border, the Edomites were on him. The moment a flock or beast of his wandered too far, the enemy had seized him. If in the carelessness of a festival the Israelites left the border unguarded, the hated Edomites found it out and came swooping down just when the mirth ran highest and the sentinels were least careful. If a Jew's field of wheat was specially rich, the Edomite saw the green signal from his hill-top, and in the morning the field was bare. There was no rest, no safety. They had met the chosen people on their way into the promised land, and tried to keep them out; and now that they were safely in, there they always hovered, wild, implacable, and watchful. There could be no terms of compromise with them. They never slept. They saw the weak point in a moment; they struck it quick as lightning strikes. The constant dread, the nightmare, of Jewish history is this Edom lying there upon the border, like a lion crouched to spring. There cannot be one great fight, or one great war, and then the thing done for ever. It is an endless fight with an undying enemy! Edom upon the borders of Judah! 1. We open any page of human history and what do we see? There is a higher life in man. Imperfect, full of mixture, just like that mottled history of Hebrewdom; yet still it is in human history what Judea was in the old world—the spiritual, the upward, the religious element; something that believes in God and struggles after Him. Not a page can you open but its mark is there. Sometimes it is an aspiration after civilization, sometimes it is a doctrinal movement, sometimes it is a mystical piety that is developed; sometimes it is social; sometimes it is ascetic and purely individual; sometimes it is a Socrates, sometimes it is a St. Francis, sometimes it is a Luther, sometimes it is a Florence Nightingale. It is there in some shape always: this good among the evil, this power of God among the forces of men, this Judah in the midst of Asia. But always right on its border lies the hostile Edom, watchful, indefatigable, inexorable as the redoubtable old foe of the Jews. If progress falters a moment, the whole mass of obstructive ignorance is rolled upon it. If faith leaves a loophole undefended, the quick eye of Atheism sees it from its watch-tower and hurls its quick strength there. If goodness goes to sleep upon its arms, sleepless wickedness is across the valley, and the fields which it has taken months of toil to sow and ripen are swept off in a night. Is not this the impression of the world, of human life, that you get, whether you open the history of any century or unfold your morning newspaper? The record of a struggling charity is crowded by the story of the prison and the court. The world waits at the church door to catch the worshipper as he comes out. The good work of one century relaxes a moment for a breathing spell, and the next century comes in with its licentiousness or its superstition. Always it is the higher life pressed, watched, haunted by the lower: always it is Judah with Edom at its gates. No one great battle comes to settle it for ever: it is an endless fight with an undying enemy. 2. How is it in these little worlds, these hearts which we are carrying about? You have your good, your spirituality, your better life; something that bears witness of God. How evil crowds you! You cannot fight it out at once and have it done. You go on quietly for days, and think the enemy is dead. Just when you are safest, there he is again, more alive than ever. We live a spiritual life like the life that our fathers used to live here in New England, who always took their guns to church with them and smoothed down the graves of their beloved dead in the churchyard that the hostile and watchful Indians might not know how weak they were. This is the great discouraging burden of our experience of sin. "We look and there is none to help. We wonder that there is none to uphold." No power of salvation comes out of the good half of the heart to conquer and to kill the bad. We grow not to expect to see the bad half conquered. Every morning we lift up our eyes, and there are the low, black hill-tops across the narrow valley, with the black tents upon their sides, where Edom lies in wait. Who shall deliver us from the bad world and our bad selves? What then? It is time for the sunrise when the night gets as dark as this. It is time for the Saviour when the world and the soul have learnt their helplessness and sin. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" The whole work of the Saviour has relation to and issues from the fact of sin. If there had been no sin there would have been no Saviour. He comes from the right direction, and He has an attractive majesty of movement as He first appears. This, as to the watcher on the hill-tops of Judea, so to the soul that longs for some solution of the spiritual problem, some release from the spiritual bondage, is the first aspect of the

approaching Christ. He comes from the right way, and He seems strong. (*Ibid.*) *The righteous Saviour*:—Let us look at what He says to His anxious questioner; what account of Himself He gives; what He has done to Edom; and especially what mean these blood-stains on His robes. 1. We ask Him, "Who is this?" and He replies, "I that come in righteousness, mighty to save." That reassures us, and is good at the very outset. The Saviour comes in the strength of righteousness. Righteousness is at the bottom of all things. Any reform or salvation of which the power is righteousness must go down to the very root of the trouble; must extenuate and cover over nothing; must expose and convict completely, in order that it may completely heal. And this is the power of the salvation of Christ. Edom must be destroyed, not parleyed with; sin must be beaten down, not conciliated; good must thrive by the defeat, and not merely by the tolerance of evil. 2. The questioner wonders, as the Saviour comes nearer, at the strange signs of battle and agony upon His robes. "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" And the answer is, "I have trodden the wine-press:" "I will tread them in Mine anger," etc. It is no holiday monarch coming with a bloodless triumph. It has been no pageant of a day, this strife with sin. The robes have trailed in the blood. The sword is dented with conflict. The power of God has struggled with the enemy and subdued him only in the agony of strife. What pain may mean to the Infinite and Divine, what difficulty may mean to Omnipotence, I cannot tell. Only I know that all that they could mean they meant here. This symbol of the blood bears this great truth, which has been the power of salvation to millions of hearts, and which must make this Conqueror the Saviour of your heart too, the truth that only in self-sacrifice and suffering could even God conquer sin. Sin is never so dreadful as when we see the Saviour with that blood upon His garments. And the Saviour Himself, surely He is never so dear, never wins so utter and so tender a love, as when we see what it has cost Him to save us. Out of that love born of His suffering comes the new impulse after a holy life; and so when we stand at last purified by the power of grateful obedience, it shall be said of us, binding our holiness and escape from our sin close to our Lord's struggle with sin for us, that we have "washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." 3. But He says something more. Not merely He has conquered completely and conquered in suffering: He has conquered alone. He brings out victory in His open hand. From His hand we take it by the power of prayer, and to Him alone we render thanks here and for ever. 4. Yet once more. What was the fruit of this victory over Edom which the Seer of Israel discovered from his mountain-top? It set Israel free from continual harassing and fear, and gave her a chance to develop along the way that God had marked out for her. Freedom! That is the word. It built no cities; it sowed no fields; it only broke off the burden of that hostile presence and bade the chosen nation go free into its destiny. And so what is the fruit of the salvation that the Divine Saviour brings to the souls of men? It does not finish them at once; it does not fill and stock their lives with heavenly richness in a moment. But it does just this. It sets them free; it gives them a new chance. 5. And notice that this Conqueror who comes, comes strong—"travelling in the greatness of His strength." He has not left His might behind Him in the struggle. He is all ready, with the same strength with which He conquered, to enter in and rule and educate the nation He has saved. And so the Saviour has not done all when He has forgiven you. By the same strength of love and patience which saved you upon Calvary, He will come in, if you will let Him, and train your saved life into perfectness of grace and glory. (*Ibid.*) *Mighty to save*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT CHRIST WAGED IN OUR WORLD AMONG MEN. It was—1. Voluntary. Christ came joyfully, willingly, and self-forgetfully. 2. Sanguinary. The victory was not achieved without a severe struggle. 3. Substitutionary. The hero was travelling in his strength, and had wrought deliverance from the foe, had saved those for whom he had gone forth to the fray. So our Redeemer came to conquer sin and death, not for Himself, but for us. II. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE CONQUEST CHRIST ACHIEVED IN THE CONFLICT. The victor from Edom was more than a conqueror. 1. He survived the fight. Many a warrior has won a victory, but has lost his life in winning it. Jesus laid down His life to conquer death, but He took it up again; "and behold He is alive for evermore." 2. He subdued the foe. The hero from Edom was travelling peacefully, for the enemy had been completely vanquished, the conquest finally won. So our great Redeemer overcame all His foes; He cried on the cross, "It is finished." And John saw the Saviour in heaven enthroned and crowned "King of kings, Lord

of lords." III. THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE CROWN CHRIST SECURED BY HIS GREAT CONQUEST. The conqueror from Edom appeared clothed in glorious apparel and in great strength; there was a halo of glory around his head. In this aspect we get a picture of our triumphant Lord. He assumed the vestment of our poor humanity, and was "as a root out of a dry ground;" yet He was clothed with the beautiful garments of grace and righteousness, of spotless purity. His crown of glory consisted in the following facts—1. That justice was satisfied. 2. That pardon was procured. The full price of redemption was paid. 3. That heaven was opened. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The second advent:*—I. The first thing is to determine the just answer to the question, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" in other words, we have to ascertain WHO IS THE WARRIOR DELINEATED IN THIS PROPHECY. 1. The only endeavour to refer this prediction to another than Christ, appears to be that which would assign as its subject Judas Maccabeus, because this great Jewish captain who did so valiantly for the Jews in the days of Antiochus, overcame the Idumeans in battle; and if every circumstance favoured that interpretation (and we might, perhaps, suppose that this illustrious deliverer, in common with Moses, and Joshua, and other saviours of Israel, may be regarded as a type of the Messiah), still we could only plead for the accommodation, not for the completion of the prophecy. However splendid the achievements of Judas Maccabeus, there can be no sense, commensurate with the expression, in which the chieftain could describe himself as "speaking in righteousness," and assert that the year of his redeemed was come, or affirm that his own arm had brought salvation: so that were it allowed that the prediction had a primary fulfilment in Judas Maccabeus, we should still have to search for another accomplishment. It seems, however, satisfactorily established that Idumea or Edom at the prophet's time was a different country from that which Judas conquered. This circumstance excludes Judas Maccabeus from all share in the prophecy before us; and there remains none but the Redeemer of men in whom we can look for its accomplishment. 2. When it is admitted that the prophecy delineates Christ, we have to determine whether it be to an action already achieved or yet to be performed by the Saviour, that so sublime a description refers. It can only have been through inattention or oversight that any have supposed the prediction to relate to the death and passion of the Mediator. You observe that though the Redeemer is introduced as stained with blood, it is with the blood of His enemies, not with His own. There is a little obscurity in the answer arising from our translator having used the future tense instead of the past; and, according to Bishop Lowth, it should be, "I trod them in anger, and trampled them in indignation, and their life blood was sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My apparel." It was not, therefore, the winepress which He trod in His agony at the crucifixion, whence He brought these dyed garments; He must have been engaged in shedding the blood of others rather than pouring forth His own, ere He breaks forth on the seer's vision travelling in the greatness of His strength. The only circumstance associated with the first advent of Christ to which the prophecy can be fairly thought to refer, is the destruction of Jerusalem at that terrible visitation in which the Redeemer came down in vengeance, and dealt with His enemies with the strongest retribution. Yet, whatever there might have been in the desolations of Judea answering to the fearful expressions which Christ applies to this act, it certainly was not from Edom and Bozrah that He came, when returning from the overthrow of Jerusalem. Of course it was not from the literal Edom, and the literal Bozrah, but neither was it from the figurative. We believe that Edom and Bozrah are here used to denote nations that have been opposed to Christ and His people, and never was there a fiercer opposition than that of the Jews ere their city was destroyed; still it is quite at variance with the rules of Scripture metaphor, that the posterity of Jacob should be described by terms which belong rightly to the posterity of Esau. We may add that Christ's description of vengeance taken is immediately followed by thankful acknowledgments of great good to the house of Israel. If the prophecy have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, how comes it to be instantly succeeded by a hymn of praise for God's mercy to the Jews? On these various accounts we do not hesitate to assert that the prediction finds no fulfilment in the events of past days; that the future must be charged with its accomplishment, and that the fearful form on which the prophet looked, the form of a warrior, fresh from the victory, must be that of Christ appearing, as He shall appear, at the close of this dispensation, when He has swept a clear scene for setting up His kingdom, and purged the earth from the pollutions of crime. And to those who are familiar with the prophecies which describe the last times, it will immediately

suggest itself, that the sudden transition from the assertion of the destruction of antichristian powers, to the offering up of the thanksgiving of the Jews, is in admirable keeping with the whole tenor of prophecy. It seems clearly the import of yet unfulfilled predictions of Scripture, that the restoration of the Jews to their own land, that great event on which hangs the conversion of the nations, shall not be accomplished without the opposition and overthrow of the confederated powers of antichrist. If, therefore, we consider the final destruction of the antichristian powers as the slaughter of Idumea, from which Christ is returning, it is quite natural that the praises of the house of Israel should immediately succeed the account of the overthrow. II. Our business is to show THE JUSTICE OF THE INTERPRETATION which would associate the prophecy with the Saviour's second advent. 1. We shall examine what Scripture makes known with regard to the second advent. 2. We shall endeavour to establish the thorough agreement between all we are thus taught, and the prophecy of our text. (1) This coming is represented as accompanied by terrific judgments. It appears from the Book of Revelation that immediately before the millennium, the scene that is to be introduced by the coming of Christ, there will be a gathering of the kings of the earth to battle for the great day of God Almighty. This is the confederacy of antichristian powers. We not only find that when Christ appears the second time it will be to take vengeance on His enemies, but we seem to be furnished with a thorough answer to the question, "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" etc. (2) The only point which seems to need illustration, ere we proceed to fix the meaning of the text, is the use of the terms Edom and Bozrah, to denote the confederated powers of antichrist. It is common in Scripture to take the name belonging to some great foe, and to give it to others whose wickedness is the only connection with the parties so called (*e. g.* chap. i. 10). The antichristian power which was allowed for years to persecute and to harass the Church, and is at last to be thrown down with violence, is expressly denominated "Babylon." In like manner, names such as Edom and Moab, belonging originally to the declared foes of God and His people, are used for others who imitate these foes in their enmity. If you examine the predictions which relate to these nations you will find prophecy, according to the character which it usually presents, passing on from the past to what we must believe yet to come; or, rather, describing the fall of those that first bore the name in language inappropriate, unless designed to apply to others who by their wickedness should deserve the same punishment. So far as Edom and Bozrah are concerned, the expressions are evidently too strong to refer to those places literally; and it is impossible to read them and not see that they relate to a yet future judgment. (3) As to the text, we must ascertain the period of the judgment it announces. No sooner has Isaiah asserted that the visited land is given up to Christ, as the avenger, than he breaks out into the exclamation, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;" and proceeds with a glowing account of the Mediator's kingdom. Hence it will appear evident that the judgments described are those which shall introduce the millennium, the thirty-fifth chapter having reference to this scene of blessedness; and, therefore, the thirty-fourth chapter delivering, as it does, a fearful visitation connected with subsequent happiness, must be expected to coincide with other predictions respecting Christ's second coming. But why are we anxious to prove that the thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah predicts the judgment that attends the Redeemer's advent? Simply because, if this be proved, we shall also prove that by the names Edom and Bozrah are denoted those antichristian powers that shall be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. In the fifth and sixth verses of the thirty-fourth chapter, it is on Idumea and Bozrah that the prophet fastens the calamity which forms the subject of his prophecy. Idumea and Bozrah denote the antichristian powers who shall be confederated when Christ shall appear. It may be contended that the prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of the literal Edom. We know that Edom was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar, but this event in no degree justifies so high-wrought a description. It cannot be without opposition and convulsions that Satan is driven from his usurped dominion. It is from Edom the warrior advances—the land in which dwelt the enemies of righteousness. We know this Mighty Being; we know the work with which He is busied. It is the Redeemer who was crucified in weakness; and who, after a display of marvellous forbearance, shall come forth to avenge His own elect, and destroy them that destroyed the earth. Therefore, we know what answer to give when the prophet demands, "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" (4) We have still to consider the answer in the text, and show its appropriateness as proceeding from Christ at His

second appearing. When the prophet asks the name of the being whom he beheld travelling in the greatness of His strength, the reply is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." This reply is not only characteristic of the Redeemer, but peculiarly appropriate, as the Redeemer returns from the slaughter of His enemies. His actions have just proved Him mighty to destroy, and His words announce Him "mighty to save," so that He is able to confound every foe, and uphold every friend. Now it seems to us that in the reply given to the challenge of the prophet, there is a distinct assertion that He who comes with dyed garments from Bozrah maintains those principles of righteousness which cannot be maintained but by an infinite judge. "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." The time at which the answer is made can only be that of Christ's second appearing. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christ has achieved salvation:*—We behold here a new revelation of a blessed and startling fact. People talk of Christ as though He were going to do something grand for us after a while. He has done it. You might as well talk of Washington as though he were going to achieve our national independence in 1950 as to speak of Christ as though He were going to achieve our salvation in the future. He did it in the year of our Lord 33, on the field of Bozrah, the Captain of our salvation fighting unto death for our emancipation. All we have to do is to accept that fact in our heart of hearts, and we are free for this world, and for the world to come. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Christ's victory:*—I. TAKE THE WORDS OF THE VICTORY WON ON CALVARY, and how they bring home to us the greatness of our need and of our redemption! Nothing short of a Divine interposition could save us. There was an old rule of the poet's art which a heathen has left on record, which said that in the drama the intervention of a god was not to be made use of by the poet, except on an occasion worthy of it. And in the great drama of the world's redemption, wrought out in the presence of heaven and earth, God Himself may with all reverence be said to have acted upon this rule. God waited while human systems did what they could for the salvation of the world. God waited through the long ages while Edom—the power of the world—seemed to wax mightier and mightier. Each one of the centuries which rolled on before the Incarnation only added to the hopelessness and despair of humanity. System after system of philosophy was tried. Each in its turn promised much, but performed little; until at length a dull, blank despair seemed to be settling down upon a decaying and dying world. And then, at length, God Himself intervened. And the work which the Son of God undertook in His infinite pity for man was no holiday task, to be entered upon with a light heart. II. WE MAY TAKE THE VISION AS RECEIVING A FULFILMENT IN OUR OWN LIVES, whenever in the mercy of God we win a victory over the power of evil around us. There are times when we need some such vision as this to comfort and reassure us in the stress of the conflict. There is the Conqueror from Edom. His blood-stained garments are the pledge of His victory over your foe. And that victory which He won for you on Calvary He will repeat in you, if you will only yield yourself up to Him. III. BUT THE PROPHECY IS NOT EXHAUSTED YET. Victory after victory may be won; but there are gaps in the ranks of those who have fought; and we have sorrowfully to confess that the power of evil still remains in the world. Foiled in one quarter, it is successful in another. And so it goes on from generation to generation. The heart is made sad and the head grows heavy with the thought that, conquer evil in our own person as we may, yet, after all, it will outlive us. It will give our children after us just the same trouble that it has given to us. Yet, here too there is comfort for us in the vision of the prophet, if we only take in its full meaning, for it points forward to a final victory in the future when the power of evil is to be destroyed. (*E. C. S. Gibson, M.A.*) *The Hero:*—I. THE HERO HERE IS ONE WHO HAD FOUGHT IN THE MIDST OF ENEMIES. What Edom was to Israel, sin is to the universe. Christ fought in the midst of enemies; entered the very heart of this sinful world, battled with evil in all its forms. II. THE HERO HERE IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN DEEPLY WOUNDED. He returns from Bozrah with dyed garments. Christ was wounded—1. In His body. 2. In His reputation. He was represented as a blasphemer, as a political traitor, as the emissary of Beelzebub. 3. In His soul. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful," etc. III. THE HERO HERE IS ONE RETURNING FROM BATTLE IN GREAT MAGNIFICENCE. "Glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." With what magnificence Christ returned from the battle of earth to the scenes of heaven (Acts i. 9–11). IV. THE HERO HERE IS ONE WHOSE CAREER HAD BEEN DISTINGUISHED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS. "I that speak in righteousness." I, the declarer of righteousness (as some render it). Though a warrior, he had invented no stratagems to deceive, and had violated no rights. Christ was

righteous in all His conflicts. He taught righteousness, He practised righteousness, He fought for righteousness, He died for righteousness. V. THE HERO HERE IS ONE WHOSE STRENGTH IS MIGHTINESS TO SAVE. His form was the very embodiment of strength; but his strength was not to destroy, but to save. (*Homilist.*) 1. "I that speak in righteousness." The very essence and being of Christ is righteousness. But the expression here seems to refer to the fact of His being the incarnate righteousness of God and the imputed righteousness of man. He speaks in our stead. He stands holy in place of our unholiness. 2. "Mighty to save." The victory was for man. He is mighty to save—(1) From the vengeance of Divine justice. (2) From the malignity of Satan. (3) From the voice of an accusing conscience. (4) From the power and fear of death. (*Ibid.*) *No man may punish Christ's enemies, but Himself:*—1. We have no authority. 2. We have no prescription, or rules authorized by custom. 3. Persecution does no good. 4. Christians are taught to love their enemies. 5. The certainty of the day of judgment deters good men from persecuting. It is not enough to persecute the enemies of Christ; we are bound by every solemn tie to perform every duty, yea more, every kind office of friendship towards them. (*R. Robinson.*) **This that is glorious in His apparel.**—*The glory of Christ in His humiliation:*—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS THE GLORY OF OUR REDEEMER WAS APPARENT EVEN IN HIS SUFFERINGS, and shone through the dark cloud that covered Him in His humiliation. 1. From His ready undertaking of the work of our redemption. There can be little honour to any man in submitting to what he cannot avoid, or doing what he dare not refuse; but the humiliation of Christ was perfectly voluntary. 2. From the greatness of those sufferings which He endured. A weak person is crushed by a small weight; but he who is able to endure uncommon sufferings shows himself to be possessed of uncommon strength. Our blessed Lord, in His life in this world, endured the greatest and most dreadful sufferings. (1) His afflictions began early, with His first entrance into the world. (2) His afflictions were constant, without interruption. (3) Of the severest kind. (4) The afflictions of our Lord not only continued, but increased, through His life, till they at last issued in an extraordinary conflict with the powers of darkness, and an immediate subjection to the wrath of a sin-avenging God. 3. From the purity of His carriage, and the perfection of His patience. 4. From the end He had in view in His sufferings, and which He so effectually obtained. The glory of God, and the salvation of sinners. II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. We are here called to admire and adore the unsearchable wisdom and unspeakable love of God. 2. The guilt and danger of all who are not reconciled to God. 3. The encouragement of sinners to return to God through Christ. 4. He is able to uphold the weakest Christian in the midst of the most dangerous temptations, though He often suffers the self-sufficient to fall before His enemies. Wherefore believe in the almighty power of your Redeemer. 5. The comfort of every disconsolate soul. (*J. Witherspoon.*) **Mighty to save.**—*Might and mercy:*—Most of our ideas of might are associated with the "terrible majesty of God. *E. g.* the deluge; destruction of the cities of the plain; earthquakes, etc. These show might in connection with judgment. The text directs our thoughts to might in connection with mercy. I. POWER IN THE WORKING OUT OF THE GREAT REDEMPTIVE PLAN. 1. Typical sacrifices. 2. Prophetic ministry. 3. Christ's atonement and intercession. II. POWER IN THE SAVING AGENCY AT WORK IN THE WORLD. 1. The Divine Spirit. 2. The Church of Christ. III. POWER AS SEEN IN THE LIVES OF THOSE SAVED BY DIVINE MERCY. 1. Their numbers. "A great multitude." 2. Their characters. Mary Magdalene; Saul of Tarsus; the Corinthians (1 Cor. vi. 11). IV. POWER IN THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK OF MERCY. Resurrection of body, and eternal union of body and soul in glory. Conclusion: 1. The divine right of mercy does not render personal effort unnecessary. 2. The fact that the Divine power and mercy are united in seeking our salvation should lead us to immediate and hearty surrender to God. (*Julius Brigg.*) *Glorious Almightiness of the Redeemer:*—The Redeemer's mightiness to save may be seen—1. IN THE NATURE OF THE EVIL FROM WHICH HE SAVES. So we measure the success of a physician, a statesman, a warrior. Christ saves from sin, the most malignant disease—from sin, the wildest internal revolt—from sin, the strongest aggressive foe. In this saving work this "Announcer of Righteousness" is almighty in atonement and in redemption. He makes a man right with God, right with self, right with the universe. II. IN THE BIOGRAPHIES OF THOSE HE HAS SAVED. The Christ of the ages has transformed multitudes. His victory on the Cross over the heart of the dying thief is but a pledge and specimen of His victory by the Cross over a million others. Mary, Saul, Augustine, Bunyan, are but conspicuous

instances out of a great multitude which no man can number. III. IN THE WORK HE HAS YET TO ACCOMPLISH. The Divine predictions are, "As I live, the whole earth shall be filled with My glory." "He must reign," etc. How vast the work of the Redeemer yet to be done! Its vastness is illustrated in—1. Individual characters yet to be renewed and perfected. Introspection helps us to understand this. 2. The vast area of human lives to be regenerated. The redemptive work is to girdle the entire globe. 3. The ages through which this work will continue. For such stubborn, widely-extended, and long-enduring sinners, only He can be equal who is "mighty to save." (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*) *A mighty Saviour:*—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS "TO SAVE"? Something more than just delivering penitents from going down to hell. By the words "to save," I understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire, the first spiritual conviction, onward to complete sanctification. All this done of God through Jesus Christ. II. HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT CHRIST IS "MIGHTY TO SAVE"? The argument is, that He has done it. We need no other; it were superfluous to add another. He has saved men in the full extent and meaning of the word which we have endeavoured to explain. The best proof you can ever have of God's being mighty to save is, that He saved you. III. WHY IS CHRIST "MIGHTY TO SAVE"? 1. Because of the infinite efficacy of his atoning blood. 2. Because of the omnipotent influence of His Divine Spirit. IV. WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS "MIGHTY TO SAVE"? 1. Ministers should preach in faith. 2. There is encouragement for men and women who are praying to God for their friends. 3. Here is encouragement for the seeking sinner. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Omnipotent to save:*—I. IN THE DIGNITY OF THE NATURE OF CHRIST, AND THE MYSTERIOUS CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON WE HAVE THE BEST OF REASONS FOR CONCLUDING THAT HE IS OMNIPOTENT TO SAVE. II. IN THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST OVER ALL HIS AND OUR ENEMIES WE HAVE ANOTHER REASON FOR BELIEVING THAT HE IS OMNIPOTENT TO SAVE. III. IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST FROM THE STATE OF THE DEAD WE HAVE ANOTHER REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE IS OMNIPOTENT TO SAVE. IV. IN THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST TO GLORY WE HAVE ANOTHER AND A CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT HE IS MIGHTY TO SAVE. V. IN THE POSITIVE DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ON THIS SUBJECT, AND IN PLAIN MATTERS OF FACT, IN THESE SCRIPTURES RECORDED, WE HAVE THE MOST INTELLIGIBLE EVIDENCE THAT HE IS MIGHTY TO SAVE. VI. IN THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE ALL GOOD CHRISTIANS HAVE AN EVIDENCE OF THE FACT THAT CHRIST IS OMNIPOTENT TO SAVE. Conclusion: 1. Let us beware of trusting in any power but that of Christ. 2. Let us rejoice that He is in all points such a Saviour as we require. (*W. Craig.*) *Christ's power to save:*—I. SHOW THAT THIS IS A PREDICTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. II. CONSIDER THAT ATTRIBUTE OF THE LORD JESUS TO WHICH THE TEXT REFERS. "Mighty to save." III. DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES. If Christ is mighty to save—1. Ministers have the best motives to preach the Gospel with unlimited freedom, energy and zeal. 2. Abundant encouragement is provided even for those who are ready to sink in despair. 3. Whatever disastrous events may come, the Church is secure. 4. If you have experienced His might and His mercy, let it be your uniform aim to show forth His praise both by your lips and by your life. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*)

Ver. 3. **I have trodden the winepress alone.**—*The single-handed conquest.*—I. THE INTERESTING FIGURE EMPLOYED. "I have trodden the winepress." This is Jesus speaking after His conquest over His foes. 1. This denotes the supreme contempt with which the mighty Conqueror regarded the enemies whom He had overcome. It is as if He had said, "I compare My victory over them to nothing but the treading of the winepress." 2. There is in the figure an intimation of toil and labour; for the fruit of the vine is not bruised without hard work. So the mighty Conqueror, though, in contempt, He says His foes were as nothing but the grapes of the vintage to His might; yet, speaking as a man like unto us, He had something to do to overcome His foes. 3. Moreover, there is an allusion to the staining of the garments. II. THE GLORIOUS FACT STATED. "I have trodden the winepress." III. THE SOLITARY CONQUEROR DESCRIBED. "I have trodden the winepress alone." IV. SOME SWEET AND SALUTARY CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED BY THIS SUBJECT. 1. The first inference is, there is no winepress of Divine wrath for thee, O believer, to tread. 2. There are winepresses of suffering, although not of punishment, which thou wilt have to tread. But I want thee to remember that thou wilt

not have to tread these winepresses alone. 3. But since Jesus trod the winepress alone, I beseech you give all things to Him. Alone He suffered; will you not love Him alone? Alone He trod the winepress; will you not serve Him? Alone He purchased your redemption; will you not be His property, and His alone? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The lonely treader*:—I. JESUS CHRIST WAS ABLE TO TREAD THE WINEPRESS ALONE. This is characteristic of a great man, that he is able to stand alone. It does not follow that a man is great because he stands alone. He may be selfish; and not wishing to be pained by the sorrows of humanity, and not desiring to give his labour and substance for the alleviation of those evils which afflict humanity, he shuts himself off from society. Thus his self-inflicted loneliness will be self-inflicted torture. Greater would be his happiness if he had greater self-denial. The man who stands alone through nervous sensibility is in a measure to be pitied and to be helped. Every rough word strikes like a barbed arrow into the centre of his nature. But it was neither selfishness nor nervous sensibility which caused Jesus Christ to be a lonely man. The Saviour stood alone by reason of the sublime grandeur of His nature. The good man is satisfied from himself, and the Saviour was for Himself all-sufficient. Society was not needful to Him in the sense in which it is needful for other men. But it is when a man has to accomplish some vast enterprise that his power to stand alone is tested. The greatness of John the Baptist was revealed, not when the crowds thronged to his preaching, not when the multitudes flocked to his baptism; but when he was cast into prison, and alone he was left to ponder over the world's cruel baseness, and the difficulty of reforming sinning men. The greatness of Luther was seen, not when men admired his trenchant exposures of Romish errors, not when the crowds thronged his way and crowded the houses and windows to see him pass; but when he stood before that imposing gathering which held his life in its hands, and said, "Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen." Only great men can do the world's greatest works alone. Now the greatest work of all was that which Jesus Christ accomplished when He trod the winepress alone. Some say that He was only a great Teacher. But it is difficult to utter new truths; and great teachers have found it needful for their success to surround themselves with sympathizing adherents. As a great Teacher Jesus was able to stand alone. The rude world was not ready for His moral lessons, and even His disciples could not appreciate the spirituality of His utterances. But He was more than a great Teacher. He came to give Himself to be the light and the life of men. And in carrying out the mediatorial purpose He was able to stand alone; for the indwelling Divinity imparted sublime power. And we, looking back to His finished work, resting upon it by faith, and deriving from it unspeakable blessings, can triumphantly declare that Jesus Christ was able to tread the winepress alone. II. JESUS CHRIST WAS WILLING TO TREAD THE WINEPRESS ALONE. The perfectly-constituted and fully-developed man loves society. The great man loves solitude; but he also delights in social pleasures; and, though able to stand alone, may not be willing to do so to the extent that his circumstances demand. Or, again, a man may be able to do some great work for the world's benefit, but says, "If there is no one to help, if there is no one with sufficient benevolence to sacrifice himself for the good of humanity, I shall not single-handed undertake the work." Now Jesus Christ did not move through this world as a gloomy recluse, and yet He did not give full play to the social part of His nature, because it was needful for Him to be much in solitude that His Divine mission might be successful. III. JESUS CHRIST WAS CONSTRAINED TO TREAD THE WINEPRESS ALONE. By the sting of the lash the unwilling slave may be compelled to get into the winepress and tread out the grapes, but no such compulsion could be applied to the Redeemer. He had all power—power over Himself as well as over others; but He kept His power in check. He was compelled by the sweet force of His own great love. And the solitariness of Jesus brings to our view the greatness of His love most vividly. IV. JESUS CHRIST SORROWED TO TREAD THE WINEPRESS ALONE. He possessed a sympathetic nature, and He would be made sorrowful by the fact that His mission separated Him from the loves and the sympathies of mankind. V. JESUS CHRIST REJOICED TO TREAD THE WINEPRESS ALONE. There is great joy as well as great sorrow in all spiritual work; and Jesus tasted both in fullest measure. This is the climax of benevolence, that it can rejoice in suffering for the welfare of others. And Jesus rejoiced to tread the winepress alone, for He foresaw the beneficent and widespread results of His labours. The treader-out of grapes is producing a refreshing beverage for society; but Jesus Christ was producing not only a refreshing but a healing and reviving remedy for humanity to the very close of the world's history. Alone He trod the winepress, but not alone

does He drink of the new wine, for He saves men in order that they may participate in the results of His solitary labours. Learn—1. To each man there is a winepress to tread. We must in a sense tread the winepress the Saviour trod, for we must be crucified together with Christ; we must penitently and believingly recognize the fact that He suffered for our sins. But more than that, each man will have his own winepress to tread. Each man has his own work to do, his own cup of sorrow to drink, his own besetting sin to conquer, his special thorn to endure. 2. This winepress must be trodden alone. We cannot be saved by proxy. Jesus Christ, even in the higher departments of His work—work which we cannot do—left us an Example, or indirectly taught us how we are to work. Alone each one must tread the winepress. The great works of life must be done alone. Moral victories must be gained when there are none present to applaud. 3. The blessed results of lonely treading will be diffusive. No man can do faithful soul-work without blessing others as well as himself. 4. The glorious rewards of lonely treading will be publicly bestowed. In a measure it is so in this world. In a complete measure it will be so in that world where rewards are rightly administered. The scholar works alone, but receives his prize in public. The investigator toils in solitude, but publicly his labours are acknowledged. We sow in the tears of solitary working but we reap in the joy of many approvals. The truth commands so few admirers in this world of error that we are often found almost alone in its defence and in its advocacy; but to every faithful defender of truth will Jesus Christ say in the presence of assembled nations, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (*W. Burrows, B.A.*) *Christ's loneliness:*—There is always a certain degree of solitariness about a great mind. What is thus true of all great minds must have been, beyond all others, characteristic of the mind of Him who, with all His real humanity, could "think it no robbery to be equal with God." You who are parents have, I dare say, often felt struck by the reflection, what a world of thoughts, and cares, and anxieties are constantly present to your minds into which your children cannot enter. Perhaps there is no spectacle so exquisitely touching as that which one sometimes witnesses in a house of mourning—the elder members of the family bowed down to the dust by some heavy sorrow, whilst the little children sport around in unconscious playfulness. What children are to the mature-minded man, the rest of mankind were to Jesus. Nay, such an illustration falls far short of conveying to us an adequate representation of the measureless inferiority of all other minds to that mighty, mysterious Spirit that dwelt in the bosom of Jesus. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." "The light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." He had nothing in common with the spirit of the times in which He lived. His views, principles, motives, associations, object of life, were not those of His own nation, nor of any land or clime on earth: they were drawn from the infinite, the eternal. He moved among a narrow-minded, grovelling, sensual race, breathing a spirit of ineffable purity and holiness. (*J. Caird, D.D.*) *The solitariness of Christ's sufferings:*—By this I mean not that they were solitary or peculiar as being propitiatory sufferings, though in this they were indeed distinguished from the sufferings of all other men. Nor do I mean merely that they were sufferings of extraordinary and unexampled severity, though that also is true. But there were connected with the nature of this mysterious Sufferer certain features or conditions which rendered His sorrows such as no other of our race could endure,—certain facts which gave to them, as to His whole history, a character of elevation and awfulness, beyond the range of mere human experience. Amid all the sons and daughters of sorrow that crowd the page of human history, Jesus yet stands forth "the Man of sorrows,"—the solitary Sufferer of humanity. I. ALL HIS SUFFERINGS WERE, LONG ERE THEIR ACTUAL OCCURRENCE, CLEARLY AND FULLY FORESEEN. II. THEY WERE THE SORROWS OF AN INFINITELY PURE AND PERFECT MIND. As it is the cup that is deepest that can be filled the fullest—as it is the tree that rears its head the highest that feels most the fury of the storm, so it is the soul that is largest and most exalted that is capable of the greatest sorrows. A little, narrow, selfish, uncultured mind is liable to comparatively few troubles. The range alike of its joys and its sorrows is limited and contracted. It presents but a narrow target to the arrows of misfortune, and it escapes uninjured where a broader spirit would be "pierced through with many sorrows." The insect in the summer breeze, brimful of mere animal happiness, is exposed to mere animal privation and pain. Its life is but one long sensation. The little child, again, has fewer capacities of suffering, fewer cares and anxieties, and troubles, than the mature-minded man,—the savage than the civilized being,—the ignorant, unrefined, unreflecting man,

than the man of high intellectual and moral culture, of thoughtfulness and refinement of taste and feeling. It is the great law of life that every advancing power, every improvement, physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual, which a man gains, carries with it, as the necessary penalty, an additional liability, a new degree of exposure to surrounding evils. Turn your thoughts to one who has begun to receive that highest of all culture, the renewing influence of Divine grace,—is it not so that he, too, becomes susceptible, in such a world as this, of pains and sorrows unfelt before? The blind know not the pains of sight, nor the deaf of sound, nor the dead and insensible of living and breathing men. And so the quickening touch of God's Spirit wakes the believer's soul from a state of moral insensibility and death, to one in which the inner eye can be pained by deformities, and the ear by discords, and the spiritual nature by sicknesses and troubles, of which hitherto it had been all unconscious. But if all this be so, how far beyond all human experience, how far even beyond all human comprehension, must have been the sufferings of the soul of Jesus. Conceive of the sun struck out of yonder heavens, and the world suddenly overwhelmed with the horror of perpetual darkness and cold. Imagine the sustaining providence of God withdrawn from the universe, and everything hurrying to desolation and ruin. But no emblem, no comparison can convey to us but the faintest conception of what it was for God's dear Son, as if God-deserted, to die. III. IT WAS THE SORROW OF A CREATOR AMID HIS RUINED WORKS. The feelings of Jesus in beholding and living amidst the moral ruin and degradation of mankind were not those merely of an exquisitely pure and sensitive human spirit: they flowed from a far deeper and more awful source. It was nothing less than the world's great Creator that, concealed in that humble guise, surveyed and moved for thirty years amidst the ruins of His fairest, noblest work, lying widespread around Him! (Gen. vi. 5, 6; Lk. xix. 41, 42.) There is a sort of sentimental melancholy which gathers over the mind of one who surveys the scene of some great nation's bygone glory, now, it may be, strewn only with wreck of departed greatness. But surely an emotion of a far deeper kind may well be called forth in the thoughtful mind when contemplating the mournful moral and spiritual degradation of humanity, as contrasted with the glory of its original structure, and the splendours of that destiny for which it was created! Even the body, the mere tabernacle in which the soul resides, a work which only Deity could create, is a work over whose ruin even Deity might mourn. Yet every sick-bed by which Jesus stood, and every sufferer's cry He heard, and every bier and grave to which His steps were led, were to His eye the ruthless destruction of another and another glorious work of God—the proofs of the triumph of the destroyer over the results of infinite wisdom and skill. But the destruction of the body is insignificant in comparison with the ruin of the soul. Shall we wonder, then, that the Creator of such a work as this—so noble, so deathless, so Divine, should have experienced bitter grief for its ruin? Reflections: 1. All such views of the sufferings of Jesus are most obviously suggestive of gratitude for His marvellous self-devotion on our behalf. 2. Is not this subject fraught with a most solemn warning to all who are living in carelessness or indifference to the spiritual interests of themselves and others? What more awful intimation could be conveyed to us of the evil of sin, and of the infatuation of those who are indifferent to its fatal consequences, than in the sorrow of Jesus? 3. Such views of the sufferings of Jesus afford to every penitent soul the strongest encouragement to rely on the Saviour's love. Your salvation was an object which even at such a fearful cost He was willing to seek; and think you He is less willing to seek it now? (*Ibid.*) *The loneliness of Christ in His sufferings*:—We behold the Redeemer—I. DESERTED BY HUMAN FRIENDS. No human friends could understand or sympathize in the work of Christ. It is the fate of many men to go through life alone. They may have many relatives, acquaintances, companions, and derive much pleasure from their society; but they may never meet with a truly "kindred spirit." There are two kinds of loneliness—the isolation of distance and the loneliness of the heart; and the latter is the far more complete and sad of the two. The fisherman, alone at night upon the sea, with no other living being near, no sound but the plashing of the wavelets, no sight but of the occasional struggling of a star through the clouds, may be in spirit at his cottage home upon the beach, and space and time are annihilated, and his heart peopled with many a dear familiar form. But far different is the loneliness of the heart! What solitude is there comparable to the spiritual loneliness of him who, with a soul filled with sadness, finds himself jostled in the midst of a gay and pleasure-seeking crowd? So is it with the man of transcendent goodness or genius. Such a one must, to a greater or less extent, be

lonely. This it was which constituted the peculiar bitterness of the trial of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 14). It has often been said that the possession of a real and true-hearted friend is at once the greatest and the rarest of earthly blessings; such a friend as was Jonathan to David. But if such friendships are rare among men, how utterly impossible was it that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should find a friend and sympathizer, in the truest sense of those words, among the sons of men. Twelve chosen associates, indeed, He had, but they were utterly incapable, as long as He lived below, even of understanding Him, much less could they enter into, and sympathize with, the great work of His life and death. That work was essentially a lonely one. For—1. He alone could accomplish our redemption. 2. Christ was alone in His foreknowledge. We often hear those who have passed through some heavy trial say, "If I had known beforehand what I had to endure, I could not have borne it; I should have sunk under the appalling prospect!" So mercifully has our Heavenly Father, knowing our frame, hidden the things that are to be from our eyes. But there was this ineffable aggravation of the grief of the "Man of sorrows," that, to the suffering of the present, there was superadded the heavier prospect of the future. 3. Then, too, from the Divine purity and loftiness of His soul, Christ suffered far more than any mere man could suffer. The more refined and elevated a man's nature is, the more sensitive he is apt to be; the keener are his sorrows, and the more ecstatic his joys. But sin, and death its punishment, the whole world's burden of which rested upon the pure soul of the Redeemer, had for Him a dark and dreadful reality of horror, inconceivable by any of us whose innermost heart has been tainted with the love of sin. 4. Moreover, in another way, the grief of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world was what the sorrow of no mere man could be, the sorrow of the Creator in the midst of His ruined works. 5. Yet again, in His power of omniscience He stood "alone." "He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." If we could discern the secrets of all hearts, if the thoughts and desires of a crowd could be rendered audible to us, how continually should we be overwhelmed with shame and horror. But Christ knew all men. II. LEFT ALONE BY GOD. When He foretold to the disciples their desertion, He added, "And yet I am not alone, because My Father is with Me." But in the hour of His deepest agony there was an exception even to that companionship of eternity. Far otherwise has it been with the martyrs of Jesus, and with all His faithful people since, in the "article of death." Conclusion: 1. Christ "trod the winepress alone" for you. Mourn, therefore, and rejoice. 2. Christ will "tread the winepress alone" again: the winepress of the wrath of God. 3. It is oftentimes the lot of God's people to be called upon in some degree to "tread the winepress alone." Daniel had to do so. But remember for your encouragement that, in the highest sense, you never can be alone in the conflict. Your Saviour met the world, the flesh, and the devil alone, that you might never have to wage a single-handed warfare, never be left without a higher Presence in the good fight of faith. (*H. E. Nolloth, M.A.*) *The solitude of Christ:*—I. CHRIST WAS ALONE IN THE VIEW HE HAD OF THE WORK HE CAME TO ACCOMPLISH. The people were looking for one thing, and He was labouring for another. Of all earthly beings His mother was, for a long season, the nearest to Him. She cherished in her heart, as amongst her choicest treasures, all the words which both human and angelic prophets had spoken to her. But we get a glimpse of a great gulf between even her and Him. All the sadness involved in this kind of solitude we cannot appreciate. We can only get some faint perceptions of it from illustrations drawn from human experience. We know that if a man have some loving purpose in his heart, and some great plan for achieving it, there is nothing so cheers him as to meet with some one who sees the matter very much as he sees it, and who will listen intelligently and with interest while he sets forth the wisdom of his plan and the worth of his purpose. Think of a Christian man going to a strange shore, where painted savages dwell. He sets his heart and his hands to the work of educating and evangelizing them. When he begins his work, who amongst them can understand what he wants to do? When he wants to feel that another heart beats in harmony with his own, he must turn from man to God. Inquire of him, and he will tell you that this is one of the heaviest trials he has to bear. Christ came from heaven to earth on the grandest errand that wisdom ever designed or mercy ever proposed. He saw this world wandering far away from God, to perish there. He set His heart on bringing back the soul from its wandering to the bosom of Him who made it; but, strange to say, He had suffered, died, come back from the dead, risen again to His native skies, before even His own disciples had clear ideas of why He had clothed Himself in mortal flesh, passed through a baptism of agony,

and shed His blood on the Cross. II. HE WAS ALONE IN HIS BURNING ZEAL FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS WORK. A child sees that his father is very earnest about some matter. He cannot see clearly what it is, still less can he explain it to others, and yet he catches the fire from his father's heart, and in his little way he is all burning with desire that his father may succeed in that about which he is so zealous. The heart may be quick to sympathize where the head is not wise enough to understand. Not even such help as this did Jesus have when He for us was leading the life of sorrow, when He for us was dying the death of shame. In this matter His own disciples were not much better than the carnal-minded multitude. Do not we too frequently leave the Saviour in the same solitude even now? We know what His desires are concerning us. "This is the will of God, even our sanctification." But, alas! how often it happens that while He looks and longs for that, our strongest desires and most diligent endeavours tend in another direction; while His Word and Spirit, while His providence and grace, are striving for our holiness, how often we make some other thing supreme! III. JESUS WAS ALONE IN HIS THOUGHTS AS TO THE MANNER OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS WORK. There was one thing the Saviour could not make His disciples clearly see—that He had come into the world to die, and that His death was to be the life of the world. This kind of solitude we may make the Saviour to suffer even now. We do in this same way put Him to shame when we think that His will can be done without uplifting His Cross, in the full and frequent setting forth of His atoning death. (*C. Vince.*) *Christ alone:*—I. A GENERAL VIEW OF THE PROPHECY. It stands by itself. The general subject of the chapter is the destruction of the enemies of God. The scene is one of surpassing sublimity, as one which tells of a conquering Messiah. Every enemy shall be trampled under foot; but it shall be Christ's own work, and one in which He will have no helper. II. THE LESSONS THAT MAY BE GATHERED FROM THIS VIEW OF THE PROPHECY. 1. Christ is alone in His great work, as against all other mediators, all other saviours, all other intercessors, all who, whether as saint, angel, or glorified spirit, should be set up by a false theology to bridge over the infinite gulf between us and God. And therefore the work can be done by none but Christ. 2. The work of Christ is alone—has been supplemented and helped by no human works and services. 3. This repudiation of anything in ourselves that shares in the honour of Christ's mediation is to be extended to our faith. I believe there are very many persons who would have a holy and jealous shrinking from having a saviour in their works, who do not see how near they may go towards having a saviour in their faith; yet this they do when, as the ground of their justification, they trust on the realized experience of a strong personal confidence, and that because it is strong. The mistake arises from their not perceiving that they must be justified by something out of themselves, and not by anything in themselves—by what Christ has wrought for them, and not by anything which the Spirit may have wrought in them. This thought should be comforting to us under those fluctuations of trust and weakened hold upon the promises which may fall to the lot of every one of us. 4. This is said to exclude from all part or lot in Christ's work, those frames, feelings, convictions, emotions of the spiritual mind, which too many regard as indispensable to their salvation, and which therefore they do in effect put in Christ's place. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Christ alone:*—I. IN HIS PERSONAL UNDERTAKING OF THE WORK OF SALVATION. II. IN THE DIVINE INCARNATION. III. IN THE PURITY OF HIS LIFE AND THE CHARACTER OF HIS MINISTRATIONS. IV. IN HIS SUFFERINGS. V. IN HIS DEATH. VI. IN HIS INTERCESSORY AND MEDIATORIAL WORK. Conclusion: 1. He is the alone Saviour for us. 2. Without faith in Christ there is no salvation. 3. How great the guilt of the rejecter of Christ! 4. How glorious the prospect of the believer in Jesus! (*S. D. Phelps.*) *Loneliness:*—I. IT HAS MANY SENSES, INWARD AND OUTWARD. 1. There is what I may call the loneliness of simple solitude. Solitude which is first voluntary, and secondly occasional, is but half solitude. Solitude which we fly to as a rest, and can exchange at will for society which we love, is a widely different thing from that solitude which is either the consequence of bereavement or the punishment of crime; that solitude from which we cannot escape, and which perhaps is associated with bitter or remorseful recollections. 2. There is the loneliness of sorrow. Is not loneliness the prominent feeling in all deep sorrow? Is it not the feeling of loneliness which gives its sting to bereavement? 3. There is the loneliness of a sense of sin. Whatever duties may lie upon us towards other men, in our innermost relation to God we are and must be alone. When the sense of sin is heavy upon us, how incapable is the soul of anything but solitude! And if such be the loneliness of repentance, what must be

the loneliness of remorse, which is repentance without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope. If repentance is loneliness, remorse is desolation. 4. There is the loneliness of death. 5. Can we follow the soul one step further, and see it standing in judgment before the throne of God? "Every one shall give account of himself to God." II. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. There are two senses at least in which you ought to practise the being alone. 1. Being alone in prayer. I do not mean that you must necessarily be in a place by yourselves, in order to pray: if this were essential to prayer, then the poor and the young in most cases could never pray. But I mean that in praying, whether by yourselves (which is, no doubt, a great advantage) or in the presence of others, you should try to shut out the recollection of any other presence than that of God. 2. If you are to die alone, and if you are to be judged alone, be not afraid also to think alone, and, if necessary, to act alone. 3. If the view of life thus presented seem to any one to be flat and dreary, let him remember that, though we must pray alone, and judge alone, and sometimes act alone, and certainly die alone, and be judged alone, yet there is a reality of sympathy still, which we may find and rejoice in if we will. It is a sympathy independent of sight and word, secret yet real, unchangeable and eternal. Sympathy with Him who so loved that He died for us, and who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Sympathy with Him, and with God through Him, exercised by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is the Divine aspect of Christian sympathy. But there is a human side also. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Christian loneliness:*—Every one of us probably takes the same impression from those words. What is the figure they summon up before us all? Probably that of a man left to solitary toil, deserted but not faithless, having a heavy burden to bear, and bearing it uncheered by social sympathy,—a hard and bitter work to do, yet nobly doing it alone. From this image our minds pass unconsciously over to the solitude of our spiritual strifes and inward sufferings. We instantly and universally recognize in Him who "trod the winepress alone" a representative of all our internal work. For a religious purpose, and as a part of God's spiritual discipline with us, our deepest experiences must be passed through in solitude. We must suffer alone, we must get wisdom alone, we must be renewed in the inmost spirit of our minds alone, we must resist temptation alone, we must meditate alone and pray alone, and we must pass through the valley of the shadow of death alone. It was a distorted perception of that truth that gave what value they had to the old systems of monasticism, or religious retirement. These ancient practices our modern times have, for the most part, reversed. If a man is much alone now, it must be rather by a direct effort to that end than by popular habits. Some such effort will be salutary to his virtue. Social habits may soften asperities, but it needs solitude to settle our principles. Social habits may make us good-natured, but to get certainty for our ideas, or assurance for our faith, we must be alone. The friction of society may smooth down individual peculiarities, but there are such things as a smoothness that is insipid, and a compliance that is so accommodating as to be cowardly. If constant intercourse with others neutralizes our prejudices, it may also undermine our simplicity, coax our kindly sentiments into vicious compromises, and tempt our integrity out of its self-possession into disgraceful bargains. If we learn amiability in the mixed company, so we do learn what staunch and steadfast convictions are by standing alone. If we form delightful connections in the one, so do we gain the nobler faculty of thinking, acting, believing for ourselves, in the other. At a period when the activities of associate enterprise threaten Christian individuality with so many perils, among customs where majorities take the place of single-headed tyrants, and the bribe of promotion bewilders the clear-sightedness of faith—let us look to our integrity. I do not forget the obvious arguments for association, nor the often quoted benefits of a union of minds. Let them stand for their undoubted worth. It is clear that Christian faith wins some of its noblest victories only in social revivals. But let it be also remembered that a concentration of the individual will upon its own chosen purpose, such as a man never gets except by isolating himself, is a matter of as much moment to the success of every good interest in the world as the contact of numbers. Who would not prize more highly the solemn determination of a single independent mind, taken and weighed and perfected in solitude, unswayed by public dictation, and incorrupt from the hot breath of crowds, than the longest subscription-list to a set of written or concocted measures, or the enthusiastic "resolutions" of the loudest caucus? Let it be further remembered, that if combinations of masses are promotive of good causes, they are also mighty

facilities for bad ones. This truth may enter more readily if we remember that the higher intellectual qualities—those that are more intimately related to the moral, and thus have the largest agency in forming character—depend on solitude for their most successful cultivation. Judgment, imagination, clearness and consistency of thought, breadth of vision, whatever constitutes the originality and natural force of the mind—these are all nurtured in lonely studies. So, emphatically, of those best persons, who by the combined weight of intellectual and moral attributes have been the signal reformers or builders of institutions. Affecting society far and wide, they did not gather their best power in social resorts, but alone with heaven: Paul, three years in Arabia; Luther, in his cell; Alfred, in the Island of Nobles. Mohammed, Columbus, Washington—their youth was apart from men; their career was baptized and initiated in the air of retirement. And of the great Lord of all, the Divine ministry to the world must begin with forty days in the wilderness. If being alone is tributary to intellectual greatness, it is still more so to the proper symmetry and health of the moral principles. Still more strictly does this rule hold of the deeper emotions. The loftiest of all our possible emotions is religious reverence, expressing itself in worship, or prayer. Nature has herself given a broad hint of this truth, in making it absolutely impossible for us to express to any mortal the deepest feeling. Impatience of solitude is a bad religious sign. Whoever dreads to be alone has reason to dread the hereafter. If he is afraid of being left to himself, how shall he dare to meet the searching of his Judge? Something must have gone terribly wrong with us, if we are afraid to be shut up with none but God. This is demanded from us in mere fidelity to Truth herself; for when we begin to esteem her for the multitudes she fascinates, when we begin to count up her adherents and ask whether she draws large audiences, we have already broken from the true loyalty. Next to the sordidness of wedding Truth to her dowry, which Stillingfleet satirizes, is that of choosing her because all the world admires her. A Christian loneliness, the solitude that has Christ in it, renews man's strength. Human suffering, in all its forms, is solitary. (*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*) *Duty pertains to the individual:*—In the responsibilities of life we must tread the winepress alone. Duty is, in the last resort, to be determined by the individual conscience, and to his own Master must each one stand or fall. (*A. P. Peabody.*) *The soul's solitude:*—What are the appointed resources for this spiritual loneliness? 1. Christian fellowship. We are one in Christ. Our fellowship is with Him, and through Him with one another. 2. Direct communion with Christ. 3. We are not alone, for the Father is with us. 4. More intimate union than we can enjoy here is reserved for us in heaven: Shall not this hope bring us into nearer and happier fellowship even here? (*Ibid.*) *Christ's solitariness in the work of atonement:*—Look at the ancient institution of the annual day of atonement. On other occasions inferior priests slaughtered the animals and prepared the offering. But upon this anniversary, the high priest alone officiated. And all the drudgery, clear down to the lighting of the lamps and the kindling of fire for incense, a long work of preparation, requiring sometimes more than two weeks to complete it, so the Rabbins tell us, was undertaken by him. That day was a day of days to him. He was to put aside his jewelled mitre, and wear none of the so-called "golden garments;" even his shining breastplate of precious stones had to be relinquished, his ephod and his bells. Clad in simple linen, a linen girdle, a linen coat, a linen mitre, he alone entered the Holy of holies, he alone laid the victim on the coals, and he alone led the people's scapegoat away into the wilderness. All this was typical of the solitary errand of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ's solitariness in death:*—Did you ever ponder the pertinency of the fact that none among all the disciples of our Lord, not one of all the adherents who followed Him, was permitted to die with Him? He was condemned as a rebel; yet not a single man or woman who succoured Him, or sustained Him, in that so-called insurrection, suffered for it. A few of His friends talked about it; one of them said outright on a conspicuous occasion, "Let us go and die with Him;" but none of them ever did. The meaning of this is very plain. It was an infinitely wise precaution against mistake. It would, without a doubt, have misled some feeble minds if, by any accidental confusion, another name had been coupled with His in the dying hour on the cross. It was just as well that all those disciples forsook Him and fled. One Priest, one Lamb, was all that was needed. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. **For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart.**—"*The day of vengeance,*" announced in chap. lxi. 2. "Is in Mine heart," *i. e.* in My purpose. (*Prof. J.*

Skinner, D.D.) *The Redeemer's vengeance upon the grand enemy of the redeemed:*—These words are a material repetition of the first promise (Gen. iii. 15). We have here—1. The designation of God's remnant of mankind—sinners. "My redeemed." They are Mine by election, Mine by My Father's donation, Mine by the purchase of My blood, and they are to be Mine by conquest. 2. The deep resentment that the glorious Redeemer has of the quarrel of the redeemed. "The day of vengeance is in Mine heart." 3. The stated time for the deliverance of the redeemed. "The day." "The year." 4. The Redeemer's satisfaction with the view of all this. He speaks of it with a particular air of joy and triumph. (*E. Erskine.*) *The annals of redeeming love:*—I. THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS REDEEMER. He is—1. A chosen Redeemer. "Mine elect." 2. A mighty Redeemer. "Mighty to save." 3. A Redeemer of great authority. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." 4. A wealthy Redeemer. 5. An incomparable Redeemer. 6. A resolute and courageous Redeemer. II. THE REDEEMED. III. THE YEAR OF THE REDEEMED. There is—1. The year of purposed redemption. With respect to this year Christ is called "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." 2. The year of purchased redemption. . This year the great God was incarnate; the great Lawgiver voluntarily subjected Himself to His own law; God blessed for ever was made a curse; everlasting righteousness was brought in; God actually laid the foundation of a throne of grace, in justice and judgment, etc. 3. The year of exhibited redemption. The year of a Gospel-dispensation among a people. 4. The year of applied redemption; under which may be comprehended the whole period of time from the soul's conversion unto the day of death. 5. The year of consummate redemption. This is a year which never, never ends. IV. THE YEAR OF THE REDEEMED, THE JOY OF THE REDEEMER'S HEART. V. APPLICATION. (*Ibid.*) *The Redeemer's vengeance:*—I. WHO IS THE GRAND ENEMY THAT THE GLORIOUS REDEEMER HAS IN HIS VIEW? Satan. II. THE GROUND OF THE QUARREL THAT OUR REDEEMER HATH AGAINST THIS ENEMY. What injury hath Satan done to the redeemed? He hath deceived them; he defaced the image of God; he made them liable to the curse of the law; he made them his own slaves. III. WHAT VENGEANCE IS IT THAT OUR REDEEMER TAKES UPON THIS ENEMY OF THE REDEEMED? A bruising of his head (Gen. iii. 15). A judging of the devil (Jno. xvi. 11). A destroying of the devil (Heb. ii. 14). A spoiling of principalities and powers (Col. ii. 15). Our glorious Redeemer—1. Invades Satan's usurped kingdom and government, which he had established in this world. Satan is called "the god of this world." 2. Outshoots the devil in his own bow—takes this wise spirit in his own craftiness. 3. Condemns sin, the first-born of the devil. 4. Wrests the keys of death and hell out of the devil's hand. 5. Lays a heavy chain upon the roaring enemy. 6. Takes those who were his slaves from under his power, and arms them with His truth, whereby they make war against him, under Christ as their Leader and Commander. 7. Makes a spectacle of him and all his legions (Col. ii. 15). 8. Makes a road between heaven and earth, by His ascension, through the very territories of the devil, who is called "the prince of the power of the air." 9. Will, at the last day, make the poor believer, who was once under his power, and whom he many times harassed with his fiery darts, to judge and condemn him. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?" 10. Burns his galleries, where he has walked up and down. "The earth . . . shall be burned up." IV. THE STATED TIME OF VENGEANCE, here called a "day." 1. There are some seasons of His taking vengeance upon him in his own person. (1) Upon the back of his first sin, when that proud spirit, swelled with ambition, attempted the throne of heaven, the Son of God, armed with His Father's power, turned Him and His apostate legions down from heaven to hell (2 Pet. ii. 4). (2) The day of Christ's incarnation. (3) Of Christ's death. (4) The last judgment. 2. When Christ is avenged upon this enemy in the redeemed. (1) The day of conversion. (2) The day of believing. (3) The renewed actings of faith under strong temptation. (4) The day of special nearness to God in His ordinances. (5) When the Redeemer brings multitudes of souls to yield themselves unto His obedience. (6) When an honourable testimony is given for Christ in a Church against errors and blasphemies that the devil and his emissaries have vented, to the darkening of the Redeemer's glory. (7) The day of death, when the poor believer is guarded to glory through his principality. V. WHY THIS DAY OF VENGEANCE IS SAID TO BE IN THE REDEEMER'S HEART. 1. He had firmly purposed it. 2. The thoughts of it were a delight to Him. 3. He had not forgotten the quarrel he had with Satan and his works. 4. The stated time of final vengeance lay as a secret in His own breast. V. APPLICATION. (*Ibid.*) The year

of My redeemed is come.—*The "year" of redemption:*—A rendering preferred by many authorities is, "the year of My redemption:" the plural being taken as expressing the abstract idea, in accordance with a common Hebrew usage. The year of redemption is the same as the year of Jehovah's favour in chap. lxi. 2; it is the time of Israel's victory and salvation, a year that has no end. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The year of the redeemed:*—I. THE PERIOD FORETOLD. The word "year," in such connections as this, is to be interpreted in a general sense as applying to a lengthened period of time. "The year of the redeemed" may not mean so much the year when Christ died, in order to redeem them, as the period when He should begin to win the victories of His grace among them; the period when He should be "lifted up" by the preaching of the Gospel, and "draw all men unto Him;" the period when the sign of the Son of Man, in the preaching of Christ and of Him crucified, should be visible in the ecclesiastical world, represented in the everlasting prophecy as heaven, and when by the preaching of a crucified Saviour, sinners, numerous as on the day of Pentecost and in succeeding times, should be won from darkness to light, and translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son. II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS ARRIVAL. God has decreed it, and all its glories must be realized. It may be said to be come in the distinct and positive revelations of prophecy. In the prophecies of God, the decrees of God are unfolded. (*W. H. Cooper.*)

Ver. 5. **And I looked, and there was none to help.**—*Man's extremity the Divine opportunity:*—The doctrine of the text is, that salvation, of every kind and every degree, is from the Lord. I. THIS POINTS OUT TO US THAT ALL MEN ARE IN A MISERABLE CONDITION. Why should man need salvation? He is lost. II. THE TEXT IMPLIES THE INTERPOSITION OF GOD. The Speaker is the great Messiah, and He speaks in righteousness. There are difficulties in the way of a sinner's recovery which none can remove but God. "The righteousness by faith" is accompanied by the power of God, and this alone can save the soul. 1. This shows God's knowledge of the dreadful condition of the sinner. He lays help on One mighty to save. 2. It bespeaks His forbearance (Rom. iii. 25, 26). 3. It implies the impossibility of man's being saved but by a Divine arm; and the all-sufficiency of God to save sinners, however deeply sunk in sin, misery, and guilt. 4. Here is the language of triumph, as though God delighted in this work of saving sinners: "Mine own arm," etc. He had a sufficiency of wisdom to devise the plan; a fulness of merit to justify, of the Spirit to sanctify, of mercy to pity, and of grace that should abound, in the sinner's pardon, and in the purity and peace of his conscience. III. THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS SALVATION. 1. The full character of God is displayed. Here I see God to be just and wise in pardoning the sin He punishes, and showing His abhorrence of the sin He forgives. 2. Salvation is secured to every believer. 3. This secures all the glory to God. 4. It is the most encouraging that could have been devised. 5. It binds the strongest obligation on us. If saved without any power or merit of my own, what shall I render for such a salvation to such a sinner? (*J. Cooke.*)

Ver. 7. **I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.**—*God's redemptive triumph evoking thanksgiving, prayer and confession:*—The dialogue ended, the prophet's tone changes. In the assurance that the redemption, guaranteed by Jehovah's triumph, will be wrought out, he supplies faithful Israel with a hymn of thanksgiving, supplication and confession, expressive of the frame of mind worthy to receive it (chap. lxiii. 7—lxiv. 12). In a strain of surpassing pathos and beauty the prophet, as it were, "leads the devotions" (Cheyne) of his nation, and lends words by his eloquence to their repentance. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *A chastened piety:*—The passage (chap. lxiii. 7—lxiv. 12) is one of the most instructive of Old Testament prayers, and deserves careful study as an expression of the chastened and tremulous type of piety begotten in the sorrows of the Exile. So far as the ideas of the passage are concerned, it might have been composed at any time from the Exile downwards. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The tender mercies of God:*—To discover the heights or to fathom the depths of this grace, exceeds the power of men or angels; yet the view perhaps may be enlightened by some of the following reflections. 1. In purposing and planning the great work of redemption, the Eternal Mind was self-moved, uncounselled, unsolicited. 2. This love was wholly disinterested, having no reward in view but the pleasure of doing good. 3. This love is still more sublimely considered as acting towards inferiors. 4. Redeeming love is still more wonderful as

exercised towards enemies. 5. This love appears altogether astonishing when we consider the greatness of the sacrifice it made. 6. The extent of redeeming love further appears in the magnitude of the blessings which it intended for a ruined race. 7. This mercy is heightened by the fact that the Saviour is so necessary, reasonable and all-sufficient. 8. This mercy is still further heightened by the patience and condescending tenderness which He exercises towards His people. He calls them His friends, His brethren, His children, His spouse, the members of His body, the apple of His eye. 9. This wondrous mercy is further expressed in the gift of Sabbaths and sacraments, and especially the written Word. 10. Fresh evidence of this love springs up at every review of God's past providence towards the Church. 11. All these are the more affecting as being marks of distinguishing love. 12. The grace of God appears still greater as being abundant. (*E. Griffin.*) *A song concerning lovingkindnesses:*—I. THE MERCIES TO BE MENTIONED. A complete summary we cannot give, for who can count the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky? 1. The list commences with special electing love. In the Hebrew the eighth verse runs, "For He said, they only are My people." 2. Pass on to the next sweet token of Divine lovingkindness which is found in the Fatherly confidence which the Lord has manifested towards His people. "Children that will not lie." 3. His great sympathy with us. "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (ver. 9). 4. His intimate intercourse with us. "The Angel of His presence saved them." 5. The gracious interpositions of God on behalf of His people. "In His love and in His pity He redeemed them." 6. God provided for, led, protected and upheld His people by a wondrous special providence while they were in the wilderness. "He bare them," etc. (ver. 9). 7. The prophet further goes on to mention the Lord's chastening. It is to be sorrowed over that we need chastening, but God is to be praised that He does not withhold it from us (ver. 10). 8. The next thing the prophet sings about is God's faithfulness, for though He did smite His people, yet in a very short time we find that "He remembered the days of old," etc. (vers. 11–13). We will close this catalogue with one more choice mercy, for the prophet tells us of God's giving His people rest after all (ver. 14). II. CERTAIN POINTS WORTHY OF SPECIAL MENTION. 1. Whatever has been bestowed upon us by God reveals His lovingkindness. 2. The consequent praise which is due to God on account of this. 3. The uniform nature of all God's dealings with us. "According to *all* that the Lord hath bestowed on us." Let us praise Him according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, blessing Him for bitters and sweets, for blacks and whites, for storms and calms. 4. The grandeur of the goodness which is shown in every mercy. "The great goodness toward the house of Israel." Ingratitude makes little of much, but gratitude sees much in little. 5. We ought to take peculiar note in our song of the condescending tenderness and pity of God, for such is the force of the next expression, "which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies,"—a clearer rendering would be, "according to His compassion." 6. One other special note demands to be heard, and that is the multitudinous displays of His love. "According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses," of all shapes, and at all times, and in all ways, and from all points of the compass. III. PRACTICAL REASONS WHY WE SHOULD THUS MENTION THE LOVINGKINDNESSES OF THE LORD. 1. That we may have pleas in prayer. This is the best way of praying: "Lord, Thou hast done this for Thy servant, Thou hast done that for Thy servant, therefore I beseech Thee do more." This is not after the manner of men, for when we once relieve a man's necessities we say to him, "Do not come again;" but every gift which God gives is an invitation to come again, and the best way in which we can show our gratitude is to seek for further gifts. 2. These memories will act as stays to your faith. 3. They will minister to your present comfort. 4. The thought of all this would make us love God more, and obey Him better. 5. To mention the Lord's goodness enables us to cheer others, for we do not know who may be standing by. 6. It will glorify Him, and this should always be your master motive. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A rinsed mouth:*—The Lord rinse your mouths out if you have a bitter way of talking about other people, or about His providence, and lead you henceforth to glory in His holy name. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 8. **Children that will not lie.**—*Sincerity toward God:*—The Christian exemplifying the power of truth in his renewed nature, and in all the engagements and relations of life, is a phenomenon—a miracle of grace. A Christian Church, consisting of believers adorning, in all things, the doctrine of God our Saviour, are men "wondered at." Yet, peculiar or eccentric as the course of such men may be

deemed in the world, it is evident, from Scripture, that the people of God are expected to render practical homage to the truth no less habitual and profound. I. THEIR REGARD FOR TRUTH. "Children that will not lie." 1. They estimate truth at its proper value. Buy the truth, but sell it not. Divine truth—the truth as it is in Jesus—is the greatest treasure our world contains. The full possession of this treasure cannot be secured with diligence and care. "Search the Scriptures." "Prove all things." "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Yet no man ever reached a full and abiding conviction of Divine truth by a mere process of investigation. No one will ever come to the light until he feels that he is walking in darkness. No one will ever find the truth until he feels that he has everything to learn in order to life and salvation, and that Christ alone can teach him. "All Thy children shall be taught of the Lord." 2. When truth is sought from this Divine source it will be cordially welcomed. 3. They are concerned for the preservation of the truth in themselves. Not in the letter only, but in its spirit and power. The truth may be held in unrighteousness. The Gospel itself may become the savour of death unto death. What solemn words are those of Christ, "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" 4. They bear a distinct and consistent testimony for the truth. What we feel deeply we shall speak freely. We believe, said the apostle, and therefore speak. 5. If the truth be so valued, received, obeyed, and testified, it will exert a practical influence in all the relative duties and circumstances of life. II. HOW FAR IS THIS THOROUGH TRUTHFULNESS DISTINCTIVE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD? 1. Sincerity toward God—faith unfeigned—brings with it the conviction that the subjects of it are His people. They have the witness within themselves. They are the children of light. They that have known the truth in its power can say, "The truth dwelleth in us, and shall be in us for ever." 2. Their relation to God is made manifest to others. 3. Such sincere and faithful men have the strength of the people of God. If you would find the strongest men in the world's history you must not look for them in camps, in senates, or in palaces, but in dungeons, in exile, or at the stake. It was not Cæsar, Alexander, Napoleon, or Wellington that effected the greatest changes in the world, but men who were made witnesses for the truth. "Ye are strong, for the Word of God abideth in you; and ye have overcome the wicked one." The spirit of faith alone is invincible. 4. Those who are faithful to the truth have the freedom of God's people. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts." 5. They have the peace of the people of God and the honour sure to arise from fidelity. (*J. Waddington, D.D.*) *Fidelity between God and His people:*—God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with Him. (*M. Henry.*) *"Children that will not lie":*—God's people are children that will not lie, for those that will are not His children, but the devil's. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. In all their affliction He was afflicted.—*God not impassive:*—Just as a man may feel pain, whilst in his own person he is raised above it, so God feels pain without His blessedness suffering hurt; and so He felt His people's suffering; it did not remain unreflected in His own life; it moved Him inwardly. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *"The Angel of His presence":*—1. The "Presence" (lit. "Face") of Jehovah is used elsewhere of His self-manifestation. The fundamental passage is Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15. But compare also Deut. iv. 37; Lam. iv. 16. 2. An "angel of the Presence," on the other hand, is a figure elsewhere unknown to the Old Testament: the phrase would seem to be "a confusion of two forms of expression, incident to a midway stage of revelation" (Cheyne). 3. The "Face" of Jehovah, however, is not (as the LXX inferred) just the same as Jehovah Himself in person. It is rather a name for His highest sensible manifestation, and hardly differs from what is in other places called the *Mal'ak Yahveh* (Angel of Jehovah). This is shown by the comparison of Ex. xxxiii. 14 f. with xxiii. 20–23. The verse, therefore, means that it was no ordinary angelic messenger, but the supreme embodiment of Jehovah's presence that accompanied Israel in the early days. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) The Angel in whom Jehovah was seen; who was Jehovah Himself in manifestation. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) Not some one of the "ministering spirits," nor some one of the angel-princes standing in God's immediate presence (archangels), but the one whom God makes the medium of His presence in the world for effecting the revelation of Himself in sacred history. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Angel of His presence:*—

The great majority of men dread affliction more than they dread sin. And yet the two things are related—sometimes as cause and effect and sometimes by more distant connections. I. AFFLICTIONS MAY BE DIVIDED INTO THREE CLASSES—the physical, the mental, and the emotional. Not that we can ever totally separate these three, but for purposes of consideration it may be practicable to do so. 1. It is very hard to resist a plea from physical disability. It is well that it should be so, for callous indifference to the causes of sorrow and pain found in the lives of others is surely a most unpromising state. Anything which will draw us out of ourselves, and keep us from being self-contained, must surely be, in some sort, a servant of God. Our Lord recognized the physical afflictions of men and entered sympathetically into them. 2. But physical afflictions, though more impressive, are oftentimes more endurable than mental afflictions. Indeed, when we come to the last analysis of the case, we find that the mental region is the region where pain reports itself. If we could totally separate the physical and mental, and keep the mind clear and calm while the body suffered its pains and penalties, affliction would be a very different matter from what it now is. Only that then physical affliction would lose its meaning and purpose, for everything physical is for the sake of the mental. But there are mental sufferings which do not report themselves in physical manifestations. The mind is often so tried with doubt and debate—so cast down by its own inability and decrepitude—that it is in a constant state of unrest, and no report thereof is made in the physical frame—no report anyway of such a nature that all can read it. 3. But back of the intellectual department of the mind is that other profounder realm covered by the word "emotional." This emotional region is the strangest and strongest of all. It is the realm of love, of joy, of peace—or of hatred, joylessness, discord. Without our emotions we should be not men and women, but stones, or at best animals. Our emotions gather around persons, places, objects, and these become to us of such transcendent worth that all the world seems poor in comparison with them. II. When we think of these things, HOW WONDROUS, HOW TERRIBLE DOES THIS NATURE OF OURS SEEM! We become afraid of ourselves. To be owners of ourselves seems too great a responsibility. Does it not seem to us that the Creator, in giving us this nature, has taken upon Himself a responsibility so great and so fearful that none but Himself could bear it? We ask ourselves, in amazement, what must His own nature be? III. Is not this the revelation made by the prophet, that WE ARE NOT ALONE IN OUR AFFLICTIONS? As it was with the Israelites, so is it with all the spiritual Israel; for they and we are not unlike. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." He! Who? The Deliverer. The One who identified Himself with them. And His nature has not changed. We assume that Deity cannot suffer, but we do not know it. We suppose that Deity means perfection—impassive perfection. But is impassivity perfection? May there not be suffering which has in it more of perfection than imperfection, suffering which does not arise from sin, or from weakness, or from anything outside perfection? Anyway, Jesus Christ has come between us and naked, unknowable Deity; He has united in some way the human and the Divine. And He is, in some mysterious manner, identified with us; and in all our afflictions He is afflicted, and inside all the affliction is "the Angel of His presence" to save us. I can't tell you what this Angel of the presence means. But cherish faith in these unseen forces and powers—ay, in unseen personal ministries. (*R. Thomas, D.D.*) *The spheres of compassion:*—I. GOD'S COMPASSION IN THE SPHERE OF HUMAN SORROW. We must not make too much of human sorrow. There is much else in the life of man. There is the joy of youth and the sober delights of age. Does any man really think that God looks down on all this welter and does not care—and, because He does not care, does not prevent it? God would not prevent it if He could, and He could not if He would. A world such as ours, and without suffering, is not possible to God. It is His sovereign will which has made every law under which we suffer, and His holiness which enforces every penalty. This compassion in the sphere of sorrow has been from the "days of old" long before men had eyes to see it. But it reaches its highest manifestation in the life of Jesus our Lord. God's compassion is still working in the sphere of human sorrow, in the heart of the ascended Christ. Even now in all your affliction He is afflicted, and the angel of His presence is saving you, not from suffering, but from fall and shame. II. GOD'S COMPASSION IN THE SPHERE OF SIN. The compassion of God has a greater work to do than to transform suffering, by grace, into nobility and strength. It has to go down into the depths of sin. Though the sin of the world lies behind all our suffering, there is much sorrow that is wholly pure. But when we come to sin, to the bondage of evil habit, the riot of wicked passion, to the indulgence of

sloth and vanity and pride, ending in defiance of the Almighty and rebellion against His law, then compassion might well be exhausted. And then, indeed, holiness cannot but condemn, and sovereignty cannot but execute the decree; but compassion finds a way even in the sphere of sin, and so the prophet continues, "in His love and in His pity He redeemed them." But the compassion needs no words to make itself known. In the thorns on His brow, in the nails in His hands, in the prayer for human forgiveness, compassion proclaims its victory. This cross of Christ, just because it is so unlike man and is so like God, is the greatest mystery in the world. Whatever be your sin, whatever be your shame, whatever may have been your past lack of faith, come to-day again to the Cross, to find that sovereignty, holiness, and compassion have redeemed you. III. GOD'S COMPASSION IN THE SPHERE OF HUMAN WEAKNESS. Our human needs are not all supplied when our sufferings are borne with us, and our sins are pardoned. Though we cross our Red Sea, we have still the years of pilgrimage: though we lose our burdens at the Cross, we have still our cross to carry. Though we surrender ourselves to Christ, we have our warfare to accomplish. And who is there among us who knows the frailty of his past, the slips and falls of poor human nature, who does not feel the inspiration of the Word when it completes the revelation: "He bare them and He carried them all the days of old." There is no one so helpless as a disciple of Christ. Before we came to Christ, we could gird ourselves, and walk whither we would. Now we cannot take a step alone. Only by continually casting ourselves upon Him in our prayers, being led, guided, instructed, strengthened by His Spirit; only by clinging to Him in faith does our safety lie. (*W. M. Clow, B.D.*) *Christ with His people in trouble:*—We remember an old tale of our boyhood, how poor Robinson Crusoe, wrecked on a foreign strand, rejoiced when he saw the print of a man's foot. So is it with the Christian in his trouble; he shall not despair in a desolate land, because there is the foot-print of Christ Jesus on all our temptations and troubles. Go on rejoicing, Christian; thou art in an inhabited country; thy Jesus is with thee in all thy afflictions and in all thy woes. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **In His love and in His pity He redeemed them.**—*Discipline by chastisement:*—"In His love and in His pity He redeemed them," says Isaiah. These sharp and tragic punishments wherewith God visited His people were part of His redemptive work. God punished in order to redeem. He used the sword in order to deliver His people from the curse and doom of sin. It was "love and pity" that prompted even His terrible judgments. God still sometimes inflicts upon His people great and sore troubles, so that we are tempted to think He has forgotten to be gracious. But in reality it is love that sends the trouble; it is pity that prompts the punishment. "God's wrath," somebody has said, "is but His love on fire." A God who never punished sin would not be a loving God. (*J. D. Jones, B.D.*) *Divine discipline:*—There can be no government, there can be no Church, save there be discipline. In the natural world we find this law. In the animal kingdom there is ruling and serving. In the vegetable kingdom superior vitality makes the weaker plants give room. Among men we witness this not alone where brute force is displayed and secures mastery. We see it in the intellectual and moral world. Each man has his sphere, his proper position. He must be held in that position, else there is chaos and utter waste—worse than utter waste, of all his power. The work of discipline is to restore and hold man to his proper sphere. We now behold man as fallen. See him in his pristine glory. See him as he falls. Even in his prostration he is not wholly without compensation, for he has gained a knowledge of good and evil. But now the tendency in man, which before was toward God, is downward. We see in fallen man attempts to recover himself a recognition of the necessity of Divine help. In Scripture, more especially, do we find it set forth that God is the Source of that help which can restore man. Here is sovereignty manifested in mercy. Observe the characteristics of this discipline. I. IT IS JUST. II. IT IS EQUITABLE (Ps. lxxxv. 10). III. IT IS REMEDIAL—designed, like a righteous law, for good, not for punishment. It is paternal, for it brings the wanderer home. IV. IT IS SPECIAL. It is adapted to each case. V. IT IS EXHAUSTIVE OF DIVINE HELP. You cannot think of any one thing which God has neglected to do that man might be saved. VI. IT EXHAUSTS THE GREATEST EFFORTS OF THE HUMAN SOUL. Take away the beneficial effect of this Divine discipline, and the human soul sinks in anarchy and woe for evermore. Rightly improved, it lifts man to more than his pristine glory. (*N. H. Schenck, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed His holy Spirit.—*The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament:*—Except here and in ver. 11 and Ps. li. 11 the predicate "holy" is

never in the Old Testament used of the Spirit of Jehovah. It is, perhaps, impossible to determine the exact connotation of the word in this connection. It cannot be accidental that in all three cases the holy Spirit is a principle of religious life; hence the phrase hardly signifies so little as merely "His Divine Spirit"; as Jehovah's "holy arm" may mean no more than His Divine arm. Nor is it likely that it describes the Spirit as the influence that imparts to Israel the quality of holiness, *i. e.* separateness from other nations, and consecration to Jehovah. The idea rather is that the Spirit is holy in the same sense as Jehovah Himself is holy—a principle which is both pure and inviolable, which resents and draws back from the contact of human impurity and especially of wilful opposition. This Spirit is a national endowment, residing in the community (ver. 11); it is the Spirit of prophecy, resting on Moses, but manifesting its presence also through other organs of revelation (Deut. xxxiv. 9; Num. xi. 25 ff.). Hence it is said to have led the people (ver. 14), and to "vex" the Spirit is to resist His guidance by disobeying the Divine word which He inspires. The use of this verb marks the highest degree of personification of the Spirit attained in the Old Testament, preparing the way for the New Testament doctrine concerning Him. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The Holy Spirit:*—The Spirit of [Jehovah's] holiness, as an existence capable of feeling, and therefore not a mere force, is distinguished from Him. For as the Angel, who is His countenance, *i. e.* the representation of His nature, is described as a person, both by His name and the mediatorial work of redemption ascribed to Him, so the Spirit of Holiness, *i. e.* holy in Himself and producing holiness (Ps. cxliii. 10) is similarly described by the circumstance that He is grieved, and He can therefore feel grief (Eph. iv. 30). Thus Jehovah and the Angel of His countenance and the Spirit of His holiness are distinguished as three existences, in such a way, indeed, that the latter two have their existence from the first; who is the primal ground of the Godhead and of everything Divine. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Rebellion against God:*—The pronoun at the beginning is emphatic: they on their part, as opposed to God's forbearance and long-suffering. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The sin and consequence of vexing the Holy Spirit:*—I. INQUIRE CONCERNING THE EVIL DONE. 1. The nature of it. We are not to understand it as if the blessed Spirit of God was capable of real perturbation or passion. That, common reason will tell us, the Divine nature is not capable of. But yet there is some great thing lies under this expression, which we may conceive of in these two particulars. (1) His will is really crossed. (2) He doth apprehend and resent this matter; though without any commotion, or perturbation. He resents it so as not to look upon it as a matter of indifference. This He keeps by Him as the just matter of a controversy, which He will manage; and will animadvert upon it in His own time, and when a fit and proper season shall come. 2. The cause of this vexation. We may well understand in the general that sin does so; being in its own nature a direct contrariety to His good, and holy, and acceptable will. But especially rebellion against the Spirit of God is vexatious, which is a higher pitch of sin, and implies a continued course of disobedience. We may understand what sin is more especially vexing to the Spirit of God, if we allow ourselves to consider what the titles and attributes of this Spirit in Scripture are. (1) The Spirit of God is styled the Spirit of truth (John xiv. 17). It is therefore very grievous and vexing to this Spirit, to have a light esteem of Divine truth; to be indifferently affected towards it; to have a loose adherence to it; an easiness to part with it; and much more a proneness to oppose it, and run away from it. (2) The Spirit of grace (Heb. x. 29). It is therefore very vexing to this blessed Spirit when that grace, of which it is the Author, and which it is its office and business to convey and apply, or effectually to reveal, is rejected. (3) The Spirit of faith (2 Cor. iv. 13). When persons continue under the Gospel in obstinate unbelief; and the great things there revealed and discovered to us are but as a tale that is told, or regarded no more than we would regard the word of a child; a most vexing thing to the Spirit of God this must be understood to be. (4) A Spirit of contrition and repentance (Zech. xii. 10). We cannot conceive a greater vexation to Him than to find hearts hard as rocks and stones, under the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel. (5) The Spirit of love (2 Tim. i. 7); which is the great principle that disposes and inclines the soul towards God. A cold heart, then, towards God; a heart that is disaffected to Him, that keeps at a distance from Him, that will not be engaged in sweet communion with Him through love, is a most vexing thing to His Spirit. (6) A Spirit of power and of life (John vi. 63; 2 Tim. i. 7). It is a very vexatious thing to this Spirit when any indulge themselves in deadness of heart; when they allow themselves to be formal, lukewarm, and

indifferent. (7) The Spirit of holiness (Rom. i. 4). Here it is said, "They rebelled and vexed His holy Spirit." This is a most vexing thing, when persons professing the Christian name indulge themselves in a liberty to walk at random. (8) A heavenly Spirit, and the design of all its gracious operations upon souls is to fit them for heaven (2 Cor. v. 5). A worldly heart, therefore, is a vexation to this Spirit. (9) A Spirit of prayer (Zech. xii. 10). It is the great business of this Spirit to actuate souls, and to raise them to God, in the way of prayer. It is a very great vexation, therefore, to the Holy Spirit, when persons grow to a prayerless disposition. (10) A Spirit of sincerity and uprightness; and wherever it obtains, it makes men upright and sincere. Thus it is called the Spirit of a sound mind (2 Tim. i. 7). Hypocrisy, therefore, or a deceitful dealing with the blessed God in matters of religion, is a most vexatious thing to his Spirit. (11) A Spirit of union, peace and meekness, among them that belong to God. Animosities among the people of God are the most vexing things imaginable to the Spirit of God. (12) A Spirit of sobriety and temperance, in opposition to grossly sensual lusts. It is a very vexatious thing to the Spirit of God, when among a people that profess His name, there is a general profusion, and running into vile sensual lusts (Jude 19). II. INQUIRE CONCERNING THE EVIL SUFFERED HEREUPON. Namely, His turning against them so as to become their enemy. 1. The nature of this evil. It is implied that He shall cease doing for such a people as He hath done. Have we vexed the Spirit of God? then it is natural to expect that the Spirit of God will retire. Then these words express some positive evils against such persons. 2. Consider how justly this penal evil does ensue in this case. (1) This is very despiteful dealing, to do that which will vex His very Spirit. (2) This is a wickedness wherein the most immediate kind of affront is offered unto God. (3) Sinning so as more directly to vex the Spirit of God, does carry with it a withstanding of the Spirit in that which is its proper office; which is a great aggravation of the wickedness. It is one thing when I withstand a person in a thing which he does casually and by the bye; and another when I withstand him in that which is his stated business. Inferences: 1. Among a people professing the name of God, the Spirit of God is wont to be at work; and where it is not doing any work, we cannot but suppose it to be thus vexatiously resisted and contended against. 2. Consider whether this may not be much our case and the case of the generality at this time, even thus like the Jews to have vexed the holy Spirit of God, which hath been for a long season dealing with us. 3. Let us be persuaded to hasten the taking up this controversy by humbling and abasing ourselves in the dust before the Lord; for ourselves on our own account, and on the behalf of the generality of those among whom we dwell. 4. Let us apply ourselves particularly and with great earnestness to supplicate the continuance of the Spirit, where it remains breathing in us; and the restoring it, where it had been in any measure restrained. (*John Howe, M.A.*) *Vexing the Holy Spirit*:—I. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH MEN MAY BE SAID TO VEX THE HOLY SPIRIT. This sin is committed—1. When the all-important office executed by the Spirit in the Church, as sent by Christ to quicken, convert and sanctify the soul, is not duly recognized and honoured. 2. When the means and instruments by which He carries on His work are despised or abused. 3. By the unwarrantable doubts and fears which sometimes depress the minds of the people of God. 4. When any good motions or purposes which He excites in the heart are suppressed, or not followed out. 5. When the grace and energy which He imparts are not actively and faithfully exercised. II. THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF VEXING THE HOLY SPIRIT. 1. One result of the Spirit's "turning against" any one would be His withdrawing altogether the instruments and means and opportunities of grace which men have despised or abused; and as they sought not to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, leaving them to perish in the darkness which they have loved. 2. Another thing obviously implied is, His ceasing to work and to make the means of grace effectual for conviction and conversion. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*)

Vers. 11–14. **Then he remembered the days of old.**—*Israel remembering God's dealings with His people*:—It is possible that the words "Moses" and "His people" are marginal explanations, the former to "shepherd" and the latter to "he": "Then he" (Israel) "remembered the days of old, saying, Where is He" (God) . . . "with the shepherd of His flock" (Moses) . . . "His holy Spirit within it!" (the flock). (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Where is the Lord?*—I. A SACRED, LOVING REMEMBRANCE. The people remembered what God did to them. What

was it? 1. He gave them leaders. "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea?" etc. Moses and Aaron, and a band of godly men who were with them, were the leaders of the people, through the sea and through the wilderness. We are apt to think too little of our leaders. First of all we think too much of them. We seem to swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. There have been epochs in history that were prolific of great leaders of the Christian Church. No sooner did Luther give his clarion call, than God seemed to have a bird in every bush; and Calvin, and Farel, and Melancthon, and Zwingle, and many besides joined him in his brave protest against the harlot-church of Rome. The Church remembers those happy days, with earnest longing for their return. 2. God put His Spirit within these shepherds. They would have been nothing without it. A man with God's Holy Spirit within him, can anybody estimate his worth? 3. Then there was, as a happy memory for the Church, a great manifestation of the Divine power. "That led them by the right hand of Moses." "The right hand of Moses," by itself, was no more than your right hand or mine; but when God's glorious arm worked by the right hand of Moses, the sea divided, and made a way for the hosts of Israel to pass over. What we want to-day is a manifestation of Divine power. 4. Then there came to God's people a very marvellous deliverance: "That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." Understand by the word "wilderness" here, an expansive grassy plain; a place of wild grass and herbs, for so it means. And as a horse is led where it is flat and level, and he does not stumble, so were the hosts of Israel led through the Red Sea. God has done so with His Church in all time. Her seas of difficulty have had no difficulty about them. 5. As a blessed ending to their trials, God brought them into a place of rest: "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord causeth him to rest: so didst Thou lead Thy people." In the desert they rested a good deal; but in Canaan they rested altogether. As the cattle come down from the mountains, where they have been picking up their food, when the plains are fat with grass, and they feed to their full, and lie down and rest, so did God deal with His people. I read it, first, literally as a sketch of Israel's history; next, as a sketch of the Church's history. The same thing has happened to us as individuals. II. AN OBJECT CLEARLY SHINING, like the morning star. I see, through the text, God's great motive in working these wonders for His people. 1. It was God who did it all. But then, why had God done all this? Did He do it because of His people's merits, or numbers, or capacities? 2. God works His great wonders of grace with the high motive of making known to His creatures His own glory, manifesting what He is and who He is, that they may worship Him. III. AN ANXIOUS INQUIRY, which I find twice over in my text. Believing in what God has done, and believing that His motive still remains the same, we begin to cry, "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?" etc. 1. This question suggests that there is some faith left. "Where is He?" He is somewhere. Then, He lives. 2. The question implies that some were beginning to seek Him. Where is He? 3. It shows that she has begun to mourn over His absence. I like the reduplicated word. "Where is He? Where is He?" Not, "Where is Moses? Where are the leaders? The fathers, where are they? But where is He that made the fathers? Where is He that sent us Moses and Aaron? Where is He that divided the waters, and led His people safely?" Oh, if He were here! One hour of His glorious arm; just a day of His almighty working, and what should we not see? 4. Where is He, then? Well, He is hidden because of our sins. 5. For your comfort, the next verse (ver. 15) tells you where He is. He is in heaven. They cannot expel Him from His throne. 6. "Where is He?" Well, He is Himself making an inquiry; for, as some read the whole passage, it is God Himself speaking. He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people; and when He hid Himself, and would not work in wrath, yet He said to Himself, "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?" When God Himself begins to ask where He is, and to regret those happier days, something will come of it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **That led them.**—*God and His people:*—I. GOD LEADS HIS PEOPLE BY INSTRUMENTS WHICH HE CHOOSES AND QUALIFIES. II. HE DEFENDS THEM WITH THE ARM OF HIS POWER. III. HE REMOVES EVERY DIFFICULTY THAT INTERCEPTS THEIR COURSE. IV. HE GLORIFIES HIS OWN NAME IN THEIR DELIVERANCE. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) **To make Himself an everlasting name.**—*God's glorious and everlasting name* (with ver. **14**: "to make Thyself a glorious name"):—Man's chief end is to

glorify and enjoy God. God's greatest and highest object is to make to Himself a glorious and an everlasting name. Since God is God it must be so: for He is full of love and kindness to His creatures, and He cannot more fully bless His creatures than by making Himself known to them. Everything that is good, true, holy, excellent, loving, is in God. God may well desire to make to Himself a name—that is to say, to make Himself known—because He is worthy to be known. This knowledge of God is the heaven of the perfect. It is the help of the growing. Men can only get holier and better as they know more of God. It is also the great hope of sinners. If you knew Him better, you would fly to Him. If you understood how gracious He is, you would seek Him. If you could have any idea of His holiness, you would loathe your self-righteousness. If you knew anything of His power, you would not venture to contend with Him. If you knew anything of His grace, you would not hesitate to yield yourself to Him. I. GOD'S DESIGN HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. From everlasting He was God most glorious; He existed, but He had as yet no name. For a name is that by which any one is revealed, and until His power called into being the hosts of heaven, God was God alone, and there were none to whom He could be known. Then the angels lifted high His praise in their songs, and bowed low before His throne. In creation His name was manifested and magnified. But our subject is how God has made His name glorious amongst men. 1. The text speaks of God as making to Himself a great and glorious name, in redeeming Israel. 2. As God got to Himself a great name at the Red Sea, He has done much more by the great work of salvation in the gift of Jesus. 3. His design has been accomplished in the saints in glory. II. GOD'S DESIGN IS BEING ACCOMPLISHED. In many ways the grand work is still going forward. God is carrying out His gracious plan. This purpose is being fulfilled—1. In sparing the provoking. 2. In turning the rebellious to Himself. 3. In forgiving the guilty. 4. In purifying the unholy. 5. In preserving the tempted. 6. In using weak instruments. 7. In doing great things for His people by sending very wonderful seasons of refreshing and reviving to His Church. III. GOD'S DESIGN IS VERY DELIGHTFUL. 1. Because it hides pride from men. 2. Because it opens a great door for sinners. 3. Because it gives comfort to strugglers. 4. Because it sustains in trying times. 5. Because it answers our chiefest prayers. "Hallowed be Thy name," etc. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Look down from heaven.**—*An appeal to God:*—I. GOD'S PEOPLE IN TROUBLE. II. THEIR RESOURCE. III. THEIR PLEA. Past interpositions. Past mercies. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *Our Father—God:*—I. OUR FATHER'S HOUSE. 1. Heavenly. 2. Holy. 3. Glorious. II. OUR FATHER'S CHARACTER. Strong; tender; compassionate. III. OUR FATHER'S FAITHFULNESS. Survives our ingratitude; vicissitude; time. IV. OUR FATHER'S NAME. 1. Father. 2. Redeemer. 3. From everlasting. V. OUR FATHER'S CLAIMS. Honour; obedience; love. (*Ibid.*) **The habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory.**—*Whither did our Lord ascend?* (with chap. vi. 3, "The whole earth is full of His glory)":—What was the new scene into which our Lord was introduced? He went up into heaven. 1. What is heaven? The place where Almighty God is specially present (John xiv. 2, xvi. 28). But is not the Father present everywhere? (Ps. cxxxix. 7–12). What means the being "specially present"? Has it any meaning? In the case of men they are present to us, or absent from us; but there is no medium between the two. Presence does not seem to admit of more or less. Either we are here or elsewhere. There are many doctrines of religion, and this is one of them, that can only be apprehended by analogy, or, as the apostle says, "in a glass darkly." The union of body and soul furnishes in this case a very just analogy. There is no part of the human body in which the soul is not present. I mean by the soul simply the animating principle and the principle of sensation. Every member of the living body is endowed with feeling, or sensibility to pain. But that this sensibility resides not in the mass of matter, but in the soul or life, is, of course, clear from the fact that when death separates body and soul, the body has no longer any feeling. Yet, although the soul pervades the whole body, and resides even in its remotest extremities, it has a special connection with what are called the vital parts. A man may pluck out his right eye, and cut off his right hand, or his right foot, without ceasing to live. Assault the heart, and you assault the seat of life. Surely, then, there can be no objection to affirming as, on the one hand, a general residence of the soul in every member of the body, so, on the other, a special residence of the soul in the heart. There is the figure of the truth of which we are in search. Now, let us elicit the truth from it. No district of this fair, broad universe is without the presence of Almighty God. In

that Presence stands the being of everything that is. Yet, although the presence of God in and under all things as their support is unquestionable, are we, for this reason, to deny His special connection with a certain part of the universe above others? No? The earth is but the remote extremity of creation—the universe has a heart, the special seat, the royal residence of that God who quickens with His presence the entire framework of the world. This place, wherever it is locally situated, is the source of all movement in the world, just as the heart is the source of all movement in the natural body. Heaven! The region in which the hand of God immediately operates without any intervention of secondary causes, the region in which His fiat is issued to the firmament, and the firmament pours forth its rain upon the earth, and the earth yields her fruit to the inhabitants, and the heart of those inhabitants is filled with food and gladness; the region is called heaven. This is the region to which our blessed Lord's body was carried up on the day of His ascension; and into which, without seeing death, the patriarch Enoch and the prophet Elijah were translated. 2. In what sense Christ's people are now with Him in heaven. The apostle intimates that Christians themselves, in their present state of existence, have undergone a similar translation. "God," says he, "who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together (mark, 'hath raised us up together'), and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." How can language so strong be substantiated? Just consider prayer—prayer offered in the faith of Christ. It penetrates to these regions of which we have been speaking, and has its effect and operation there. A sublime thought indeed, and one of which we may make good use in stirring up ourselves to prayer! Prayer penetrates to a region beyond the stars, and, in the holy audacity of its enterprise, lays hold of that primary will of God from which proceed, through a long series of intermediate causes, all the movements of the universe. And prayer, if genuine, is the voice of the Christian's affections, the outpouring of his heart. Hence, because his thoughts are in heaven, his hope in heaven, his affections in heaven; the Saviour, around whom gather all his thoughts, and hopes, and affections, in heaven; because his prayers move in that sphere and touch the spring of God's will, he himself, according to the spiritual element of his nature, is said to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ." 3. Consider, that this region is "the habitation of God's holiness and of His glory." And here remark a striking and most instructive contrast between the two passages of which my text consists. It is said in the latter of them that "the whole earth is full of God's glory." The seraphim say nothing about holiness as witnessed upon the earth. Alas! what could they say? There is no spot upon the earth where an intelligent and devout eye may not see and adore the glory of the Divine Being. But when upon the stage of this earth we look "for judgment, behold oppression; for righteousness, behold a cry." Holiness, like Noah's dove upon the water, can find no resting-place for the sole of her foot upon this earth. But heaven is the habitation of God's holiness, no less than of His glory. Every heart admitted within its precincts is a mirror which gives back the holiness of the Most High, His hatred of sin, His stern and uncompromising righteousness, His exact justice, His fervent and all-embracing love. There shall in no wise enter into the heavenly, "anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." 4. Heaven cannot possibly be accessible to any man without a congeniality of mind to its pursuits and employments. A tropical plant cannot possibly thrive in the bleak and raw atmosphere of the North; vegetation generally is blighted and killed by an atmosphere uncongenial to it. And he who loves not praise and thanksgiving, who turns away from the thought of God's presence as an intrusion on his peace, who regards sin with levity rather than with fear, and freely cherishes any animosity, or worldly or carnal lusts—that man's sentiments and character, quite irrespective of any Divine decree, must exclude him from the habitation of holiness to which he hath no affinity. 5. Our blessed Lord's presence in heaven is that which lends to it its great attraction in the eyes of the true Christian. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 16. Doubtless Thou art our Father.—*The Jewish Church a spiritual body:*—The true sense of the verse, as it appears to me, is that the Church or chosen people, although once, for temporary reasons, co-extensive and coincident with a single race, is not essentially a national organization, but a spiritual body. The father is not Abraham or Israel, but Jehovah, who is and always has been its Redeemer, who has

borne that name from everlasting. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *God's fatherly regard for His people:*—"For Thou art our Father; for Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel knows us not. Thou, Jehovah, art our Father; from of old our Redeemer is Thy name." Jehovah is Israel's Father (chap. lxiv. 7), *i. e.* begetter (Deut. xxxii. 6); His creative power and loving, merciful purpose called it into existence. The second "for" justifies this confession, that Jehovah is Israel's Father, and that it can therefore look for fatherly care and help from Him alone; even the dearest and most honourable men, the nation's progenitors, cannot help it. Abraham and Jacob—Israel—have been taken away from this world, and are unable of themselves to intervene in the history of their people. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Jewish sense of orphanhood:*—These words came from the heart of the Jewish people when they felt themselves "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise." They had wandered from the God of their fathers, and they feel as if their fathers had cast them off. If Abraham were to appear on earth, he would not know them; if Jacob were to return, he would not acknowledge them; and what then can they do? They cannot endure life, cannot bear the burden of its sorrows and struggles without a father and a friend. What can they do but pass up beyond men, and seek a father in God? Their heart is an orphan everywhere else, and is forced to this door of refuge; "Doubtless Thou—Thou art our Father." (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *The cry of the orphaned heart:*—It has never died out, and is present still in many a spirit. I. THE WORDS EXPRESS A DEEP LONGING OF THE HUMAN HEART. With all its folly and frivolity and sin, the heart of man has been made to feel after these words: "Our Father—our Father which art in heaven." The lower creatures have not this cry, because they have not our wants, our aspirations, or the possibility of our hopes. There are wonderful instincts among them—most wonderful often in the most minute. But what curious microscope ever discovered among them a spire pointing heavenward, or tokens of prayer and praise? The magnet which is passed over the earth to draw things upward finds nothing in this world which trembles and turns to it save the human heart. It is very true that many hearts make little visible response, and seem to bear the want of a heavenly Father very lightly. But even in them there may be discerned the heart-hunger that shows itself in unnatural cravings which the lower creatures do not feel. The void may be discovered in the restless attempts men make to fill it. When we look at the length and breadth of man's history, it tells us that this cry constantly returns, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" There have been men in all ages to whom the answer of this cry has been the one necessity of life, and if you could convince them that is impossible to find a heavenly Father, they would smile no more. II. YET IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO SPEAK THESE WORDS WITH FULL ASSURANCE. The struggle to reach them is evident in the men who use them here, and is felt in the very word "doubtless," with which they begin their claim. 1. There is one difficulty, which belongs specially to our time, in the mind of man as it deals with the universe and its laws. There is a form of science which says, "I have ranged the world, and there is nothing in it but material law. There may be a heart in man, but there is no heart beyond to answer it; or, if there be, the heart of man can never reach it." 2. Besides the mind, the heart finds difficulties in itself. There are so many things in life which make it hard to believe in the love of God. 3. And still beyond the mind and heart there is the conscience. When we think of a Father in heaven, we must think of a righteous Father, of One "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." The weak, indulgent fatherhood, which is passed so lightly from hand to hand, will not fit into the parts of the world's history which show the terrible penalties of sin; it will not satisfy the soul when it is brought face to face with the majesty of God's law and the holiness of His character. III. WITH ALL THESE DIFFICULTIES, IT IS A FEELING WHICH CAN BE AND HAS BEEN REACHED. There have been men who could look up and say, "Doubtless Thou art our Father." They have said it not only in sunshine, but in storm and in the shadow of death; have given up their lives that they might testify to it clearly and fearlessly; and have shut the door and said it to their Father who seeth in secret. But we are to think of One, the greatest of all. Even those who take the lowest view of Jesus Christ will admit that He, beyond all others, taught men to think of God as a Father, and gave the example of it in His own life and death. How strong it made Him, and how patient, how active in doing good, how comforted in solitude, that His Father had sent Him, and was present with Him, putting the cup of suffering into His hand, and ready to receive Him when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" But His example, His influence, wonderful as they are,

would not enable us to follow Him to God as a Father, unless there was something in His death which laid hold of us with stronger power. It is this which enables us to go to God the Judge of all with confidence, because we go through the blood of sprinkling. And when the conscience can say, My Father; the heart begins to say it also. When the heart has found a Father in God, all the world's laws cannot lay hand on it to imprison it; it moves "through the midst of them, and so passes by." IV. THIS FULL SENSE OF GOD'S FATHERHOOD IS NOT GENERALLY GAINED AT ONCE. We do not say that the position is not gained at once. As soon as any one comes to God through Christ, he is no more a stranger and an enemy, but a child, and all the dealings of God with him are paternal. But he may fail to recognize a Father's voice and hand. Think of the ways by which it may be gained. Come, first of all, by a more simple and loving faith to the death of Christ in the fulness of its meaning. Then seek more fully to give Christ entrance into your heart and life. As the heart is purified we see God. To have God for our Father is not merely to be forgiven, it is not even to be sanctified; it is to be one with Him in thought and feeling, to listen to Him and speak with Him, as one speaks with a friend. It is peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us into this inmost sanctuary of sonship. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But to be led by Him, we must not grieve Him by sin or neglect, but welcome His whispered admonitions; and then, as we listen and obey, we shall reach the innermost room where "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." V. TO USE THESE WORDS TRULY IS A MATTER OF INFINITE MOMENT TO US ALL. Here is a Friend we need in every stage of life, and in every event of it. (*Ibid.*) *The assurance of God's Fatherhood:*—There are three chambers by which we advance to the assurance of Fatherhood in God. The first is the upper chamber of Jerusalem, which comes to us ever and again in the Lord's table, with its offer of pardon and peace. The second is the chamber of the heart, to which we give Him admission in love and obedience. And the third is the home, where the Holy Spirit teaches us to cry, "Abba, Father." (*Ibid.*) *The creed of the optimist:*—I. This noble utterance represents THE CONSOLATION AND FINAL APPEAL OF THE SPIRIT OF MAN, baffled and dissatisfied with what the poet calls "the riddle of this painful earth," or despised and rejected by his fellow-men; and that appeal is to the responsibility, omnipotence, unalterable love, and unerring justice of a Divine Father. II. The cry of Isaiah is THE INSPIRED TEXT OF THE OPTIMIST, of the man who, in spite of the riddles and difficulties and waste and failure in a world teeming with injustice, persists in enthroning God alone behind all worlds, and saying to Him, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though scientific materialism be ignorant of us, and the facts of experience seem to be against us." (*Basil Wilberforce, D.D.*) **Our Redeemer.**—*God the Redeemer:*—"Goel" signifies both a redeemer and an avenger, but the latter only as he is the former. Hence one reason for the close linking together of the two books of Isaiah. In the first Jehovah is the Avenger of the nation against the oppressor, of the poor against the godless rich, of the widow and fatherless against the unjust, of the outraged Theocracy against the no-gods which claim to be Jehovah's rivals and equals. In the second He is the Redeemer, who ransoms and delivers through the Man of His choice. It is used in both senses throughout the Books of the Law, and in the Psalms. But in the writings of the prophets it is nearly confined to Isaiah. (*F. Sessions.*) "*Our Redeemer*":—The Lord is our Redeemer for the soul. It is a great comfort to know that it is our heavenly Father who is our Redeemer. It is God in Christ. 1. Our Redeemer has suffered for us. 2. He is our Redeemer from the grave of sin. 3. He is our Redeemer, bringing us to God. 4. He is our Redeemer from our wicked self, and from the power of sin. (*W. Birch.*) *The Redeemer of Israel:*—"Our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name." (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways?**—*God's anger with His people:*—Very singular is the plea that the sinfulness of the people is due to the excessive and protracted anger of Jehovah, who "causes them to err from His ways" (cf. chap. lxiv. 5, 7). This feeling appears to proceed from two sources; on the one hand the ancient idea that national calamity is the proof of Jehovah's anger, and on the other the lesson taught by all the prophets, that the sole cause of Jehovah's anger is the people's sins. The writer seems unable perfectly to harmonize these principles. He accepts the verdict of Providence on the sins of the nation, but he feels also a disproportion between the offence and the punishment, which neutralizes

all efforts after righteousness, unless Jehovah will relent from the fierceness of His wrath. The higher truth, that the Divine chastisement aims at the purification of the people, and is therefore a mark of love, is not yet grasped, and for this reason the Old Testament believers fall short of the liberty of the sons of God. Yet amid all these perplexities the faith of the Church holds fast to the truth of the Fatherhood of God, and appeals to the love which must be in His heart, although it be not manifest in His providential dealings. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *God's withdrawing His presence, the correction of His Church*:—These are words that carry a great deal of dread in them: tremendous words as any in the Book of God. It is the true Church of God that speaks these words. They were "all as an unclean thing," and their "holiness all faded away as a leaf" (chap. lxiv. 6). Yet faith maintains a sense of a relation to God; therefore they cry, "Doubtless thou art our Father," etc. (ver. 16). And if God would help us to maintain, and not let go our interest in Him as our Father by faith, we should have a bottom and foundation to stand upon. Observe, here, the condition of the Church at that time. 1. It was a time of distress and oppression (ver. 18). 2. A time of deep conviction of sin (chap. lxiv. 6, 7). Well, then, suppose it be a state of great oppression, and a state of great conviction of sin: what is the course that we should take? We may turn ourselves this way and that way; but the Church is come to this, to issue all in an inquiry after, and a sense of God's displeasure, manifesting itself by spiritual judgments. I. WHAT IS IT TO ERR FROM THE WAYS OF GOD? The ways of God are either God's ways towards us, or our ways towards Him, that are of His appointment. God's ways towards us are the ways of His providence. Our ways towards God are the ways of obedience and holiness. We may err in both. The ways that God hath appointed for us to walk in towards Him are these here intended. Now we may err from thence—1. In the inward principle. 2. In the outward order. II. WHAT IS IT TO HAVE OUR HEARTS HARDENED FROM THE FEAR OF GOD? 1. There is a total hardening. 2. A partial hardening. III. HOW IS GOD SAID TO CAUSE US TO ERR FROM HIS WAYS, AND TO HARDEN OUR HEARTS FROM HIS FEAR? 1. God is said to do that (and it is not an uncommon form of speech in Scripture) whose contrary He doth not do, when it might be expected, as it were, from Him. If there be a prophet that doth prophesy so and so, "I the Lord have deceived that prophet" (Ezek. xiv. 9), that is, I have not kept him from being deceived, but suffered him to follow the imaginations of his own heart, whereby he should be deceived." God may be said to cause us to err from His ways, and to harden our hearts from His fear merely negatively, in that He hath not kept us up to His ways, nor kept our hearts humble and soft in them. 2. God hardens men judicially, in a way of punishment. This is a total hardening. (1) The first thing God doth, when He hardens men's hearts penally, is to give them over to their own lusts (Rom. i. 24). (2) Then He gives men up to Satan to blind them and harden them, for he is "the god of this world that blinds the eyes of men." (3) God doth judicially give up men to hardness of heart by supplying them in His providence with opportunities to draw out their lusts. (4) In pursuit of all these, God gives them over to "a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28), *i. e.* a mind that can neither judge nor approve of anything that is good. 3. God may be said to cause men to err from His ways, and to harden their hearts from His fear, by withholding, upon their provocation, some such supply of His Spirit, and actings of His grace, as they have formerly enjoyed to keep up their hearts to the ways and in the fear of God. That is the hardening here intended. IV. WHY DOTH THE HOLY GOD DEAL THUS WITH A PROFESSING PEOPLE? 1. What provokes God to it. (1) Unthankfulness for mercy received (vers. 8–10). (2) Inordinate cleaving to the things of the world at a most undue season. (3) Our unprofitableness, and unsuitableness to the means of grace we have enjoyed. 2. What does God aim at in such a dispensation? (1) To awaken us unto the consideration of what an all-seeing God He is, with whom we have to do. (2) To awaken us. V. WHAT WAY SHALL WE TAKE NOW FOR RETRIEVING OUR SOULS OUT OF THIS STATE AND CONDITION? One way is prescribed here. It is by prayer: "Return, O Lord." The arguments here given are peculiar to the case; and we may plead them. 1. Sovereign mercy and compassion (ver. 15). 2. Faithfulness in covenant (ver. 16). (*John Owen, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **We are Thine.**—*The intimate relation subsisting between God and His people* suggests strong encouragement in their supplications at the throne of grace. The Lord God is more ready to give good things to them that ask Him than earthly parents are to give to their children. They may be poor, niggardly, or hard-hearted;

whereas the treasures of our heavenly Father are inexhaustible, His liberality is unbounded, and His compassions never fail. (*R. Macculloch.*)

CHAPTER LXIV.

VERS. 1, 2. **Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens.**—*Prayer for Divine manifestation:*—I. This is nothing less than A PRAYER THAT GOD WOULD MANIFEST HIMSELF AS A JUDGE—yes, and as a Destroyer. Isaiah craved for a man who should deliver men from the oppressions of the world's tyranny, from the storms which are raised by the passions of peoples and rulers, from the weariness and exhaustion which follows when they have accomplished their projects with great labour, and nothing comes out of them. He longed that the true man should appear, who would thoroughly manifest the ways and purposes of the true God, who would remove the thick veil which had intercepted His light from reaching His creatures, who would make them know that He was present with them, that He was ruling and judging them. To long, then, for a Man who should be a hiding-place from the tempest and a covert from the storm or heat was the very same thing as to long that God would rend the heavens and come down. II. THERE IS A NATURAL HEART IN ALL OF US WHICH IS AVERSE FROM THIS PRAYER. And there is a natural religion which adapts itself to these cravings of ours, and supplies them with a language. To keep God at a distance from men is the end which it proposes to itself; to convert all persons who perform its offices, all prayers and dogmas, into barriers more or less secure against His appearing, and His vengeance, is its art. This religion expresses all different feelings of men, in different conditions of disease. It does not express the one common feeling of men, to be raised out of their diseases, to be made whole. The universal prayer—the prayer that goes up from the whole heart of humanity—is this of Isaiah. III. THE PROPHET HAD BEEN DISCIPLINED TO UNDERSTAND THAT MAN DOES NOT REQUIRE TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST GOD, but that God should protect him against himself, and should raise him out of the slavery which he invents for himself. Thus did he learn to rejoice, even while he trembled, at the convulsions in the outward world, or in human society. Thus did he understand that by all such signs God was avenging the cause of the poor, of those who had no helper, was shaking kings on their thrones, was surprising the hypocrites. Thus was Isaiah made into the evangelical prophet, the witness that unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, who can be a covert from the tempest, because He is both the Son of man and the Son of God; because God appearing in Him does indeed rend the heavens and come down. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The heart's cry:*—Here is a voice, resonant, magnificent, full of heart-chords, that says, Break up the scheme of nature and rebuild it, only thou Heart of things come to us? We catch our best selves in our best reality when we are thus impassioned. The zoologist or physiologist tells us that animals can only move when they are warm; they can only move in proportion as the sun is in them. It is the sun that makes the bird fly, it is the sun that made the little serpent leap up into your way and flash into the woods like a glare of light in darkness. We move by the sun. So, in a higher sense, in the larger, richer realms of education and culture and growth, we are moved by inspiration, not by information. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Irresistible Divine manifestation:*—Jehovah is to descend with such irresistible force as fire exerts on brushwood and water, kindling the one, making the other boil, in order by such a display of power to impress His name (revealing itself judicially, therefore, "in fire," chaps. xxx. 27, lxvi. 15) on His adversaries, and that (idolatrous) nations may tremble before Him (cf. Ps. lxviii. 2 f.). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **When Thou didst terrible things.**—"*Terrible things*":—A standing phrase for the marvels of the Exodus, the type of the great final deliverance (Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Ps. cvi. 22). (*Prof. T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) *Divine surprises:*—Isaiah pleads with God to return to His chosen people, and restore their former peace and prosperity. He makes use of the past as an argument for the future, and recites the wonderful acts of God in days gone by as an encouragement to expect that He would do the like again. If it were not that God is unchangeable,

no inference could be drawn from His past behaviour toward us; but inasmuch as He is immutably the same, we may safely infer that what He has done He will do again. I. Let us meditate upon the fact that THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS THE ONE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. The prophet shows that he believed this, for he commences the chapter by a most ardent cry to God that He would come into the midst of His people. A little before this (chap. lxiii. 15) he had prayed, "Look down from heaven;" but it is the characteristic of true prayer that it grows as it proceeds: he begins by asking God to look down; but he gathers intensity of desire and confidence of faith, and here he cries, "Come down." So eager is he that God should come, and come at once, that he speaks to Him as though addressing a warrior who lingered in his tent while a battle was raging, who would be so eager to rush to the help of his friends that he would not stay to remove the canvas or to lift the curtain, but would rend a way for himself through the canopy to come at once to the deliverance of those who called him to the rescue. It was through the open heavens that Christ went in where He now stands to plead for us, and by that open heaven the sacred Spirit descended to rest upon the Church. The impetuous character of the simile here used shows that the prophet looked upon the Divine visitation as the one thing needful for Israel. Is not this the prayer of every true heart that knows the need of the Church and the need of the age? We do not so much require more ministers, or more eloquent teachers, but more of the sacred presence. We do not want wealth in the Church, or magnificent buildings, but we crave above all things that the living God will refresh His people. The desire of the prophet in the present instance is abundantly justified by the history of God's people in all times: for when the tribes were in Egypt what could set them free from the iron bondage?—what but the presence of God? So was it when their marchings were through the lone wilderness. The favour of God is the hope of all His people. First, we see this in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world must have perished if God had not come down to it in the person of His dear Son. So, too, when the Lord Jesus comes to us by His Spirit our hope begins. And our hope of the perfection of our salvation still lies in the coming of Christ to us. Until our Lord's glorious advent, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is our only dependence for success in all that we attempt. The presence of God is essential to each one of us if we are to be saved. II. WHEN THE LORD COMES HIS PRESENCE CREATES GREAT SURPRISES. "When Thou didst terrible things that we looked not for, Thou camest down." It has always been so. Even the most expectant among men have found their expectations far exceeded; while those who have been depressed, and have prophesied dark things, have been altogether taken aback to see the goodness of the Lord. How is it that we continue to be surprised at what God does? First, because our largest conceptions of God fall short of the truth. Besides, our experience of God is very brief. We have lived as yet only for a span, or a hand's breadth. Besides that, our faith is shamefully weak, and does not look out for great things. Surprising mercies tend to rouse our gratitude. How much God is glorified by His people when He does things they looked not for. Their neighbours are surprised. III. THE PRESENCE OF GOD DISSOLVES DIFFICULTIES. "The mountains flowed down at Thy presence." Israel had enemies which were strong and powerful, nations and kings towered above them like great mountains, but whenever God came to help them the kingdoms dissolved, the people were conquered, and the mountains and hills were laid low. At this present time great systems of error oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church only needs the Divine presence in the midst of her, and all the systems of error will flow down at His feet like glaciers which dissolve in the summer sun. Many hearts are hard as granite rocks; you may pray for them, talk to them, preach to them, but all in vain. What is required is the presence of God, and then hearts of stone are turned to flesh. Within our own selves also we may see mountains of difficulty, but if we go to Christ, and so obtain God's help, every mountain shall sink and every rock melt. IV. WE MAY EXPECT TO SEE THE SAME RESULTS FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE TO-DAY, and to-morrow, and as long as we live. God is the same. There are things to be done yet by God which will astonish us beyond measure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 4. **For since the beginning of the world men have not heard.**—*God absolutely alone in His graciousness:*—"From of old men have not heard, nor perceived, nor has eye seen a God beside Thee, who acted for him that waits for Him." (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Mystery revealed:*—There is, perhaps, nothing more likely to

withhold us from a diligent process of self-examination as to our position in reference to heaven, or to induce a sort of belief that such self-examination may safely be spared, because we have not sufficient material for conducting it, than the convenient supposition of the incomprehensibleness of heaven, and our utter incompetence with our present set of faculties to the understanding what heaven is. The words of our text are those which St. Paul quotes, when he says—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And there are no words more frequently or more unhesitatingly quoted than these, as if it were heaven which the writer had in view. This is only an instance of popular misapplication of Scripture. The words may, indeed, be accommodated to heaven; but as used, whether by Isaiah or St. Paul, they have nothing whatever to do with heaven; and it is nothing but by that common habit of detaching a text from the context, and thus suiting it to our own purpose without concern as to the drift of the writer, that the words are in every one's mouth whensoever discourse turns on the invisible world. I. CONSIDER WHAT IS THE TRUE IMPORT AND MEANING OF THE PASSAGE, whether as it occurs in the writings of Isaiah, or those of St. Paul. The chapter in which our text occurs contains an earnest prayer for the manifestation of God's power, and this prayer is generally considered as that of the first converts from among the dispersed Jews, when the nation of Israel shall be about to be reunited in the Church. It is a devout and most importunate call for some such mighty interference as had been vouchsafed to Israel in earlier days, when God made "bare His holy arm, and wrought wondrously on behalf of His people." Those words are a declaration that when God shall interfere, as we yet believe that He will, on behalf of His ancient people, gathering them from their dispersion, engrafting them into His Church, and reinstating them in the land from which they have so long been exiled, there will be such exhibitions of His greatness, and goodness, and awfulness, as shall immeasurably surpass the expectations even of those who, most diligent in remembering the marvels of old, have also been most patient in awaiting the fulfilment of the long-cherished promise. Without going more at length into an examination of the prayer recorded by Isaiah, we may safely say that it is not to heaven that the suppliants refer when they use the language "Eye hath not seen," etc. And if, as used by the prophet, the words do not refer to heaven, do they as thus used by the apostle? (1 Cor. ii). You can hardly fail to perceive, if you look attentively at the context, that it is the Gospel of which St. Paul speaks—the plan of salvation through Christ, and Him crucified. And it is to this Gospel that he applies the words which are so commonly quoted, as though he spake of heaven. What are his next words? "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." So, then, you see the mysteriousness of which St. Paul speaks was at an end. II. We wish to suppose that the words were used of heaven, and to EXAMINE WHETHER EVEN THEN THEY WOULD AT ALL WARRANT MEN IN NOT ENDEAVOURING TO ASCERTAIN THEIR FITNESS FOR THE "INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS." We believe of heaven, that its joys far transcend our highest imaginations, and are only imperfectly, if at all, to be apprehended by our present senses and feelings. We are not afraid to say of heaven—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath laid up for the righteous," but do the words prove that we can know nothing about heaven? Then, what mean the words which so immediately follow—"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit"? Heaven is a mystery to the natural man. Its joys are such as lie beyond his comprehension; so that if described to him, they do not come home to his understanding. Its occupations are such that, when mentioned, they appear to him as if they must be burdens, so devoid are they of the elements for which he possesses any relish or taste. It is not, however, thus with the spiritual man. Unto him there hath come a revelation of the happiness of heaven, seeing that he has whisperings even now of that holiness which is happiness, and therefore can understand, and will be taught to feel that happiness is to be "holy even as God is holy." We tell you of heaven as of that whereof there hath been made a revelation to every believer in the felt agreement between what is told him of happiness hereafter, and what is experienced by him of happiness here. And it is just one of the worst delusions to which any man can make himself a prey to suppose that he may have a place prepared for him in heaven, and yet be without proof that he is himself being prepared for that place. Heaven is not so much a place as it is a character; neither is hell so much a place as it is a character. You may already decide whether you are in possession of the tastes without which you could not enjoy

heaven, without which you could not find it heaven, even if through some strange distribution you were admitted amongst its inmates. Submit yourselves to the Spirit; obey His impulses; follow His suggestions; cherish His presence; dread His absence. And thus may you become gradually fitted for that blessed abode which "Eye hath not seen," but which, nevertheless, may be so unfolded to those who are so growing in grace, that they can already drink of that river which proceedeth "from the throne of God, and of the Lamb," and already join in the anthem of the redeemed. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 5. **Thou meetest him that rejoiceth.**—*The godly man:*—I. THE GODLY MAN'S CONDUCT. 1. He worketh righteousness. He does not confine himself to any department of action, it may be manual, commercial, literary, scientific, professional; but in all he "worketh righteousness." He is right in all; rectitude, and not expediency, is his law. 2. He is happy in his work. He "rejoiceth and worketh." A man that worketh righteousness is sure to be happy; his affections will be harmonious, his conscience will smile on him, his God will bless him. There is no happiness but in work; and there is no happiness in work that is not the work of "righteousness." 3. He remembers God in all. "Those that remember Thee in Thy ways." God has His ways and His methods of action, and they are manifold. He remembers God in His ways in nature, in the government of man, in the dispensations of redeeming grace. II. THE GODLY MAN'S COMPANION. "Thou (*i. e.* God) meetest him that rejoiceth." Such men have meetings with God. 1. Conscious meetings. All men meet with God, but they are unconscious of it. The good man knows it; he can say, "God is in this place." 2. Loving meetings. He meets him as the father met the prodigal son on his return, overflowing with love and joy. 3. Preparatory meetings. He meets them to prepare them for a meeting with Him that shall be uninterrupted, beatific, and eternal. Conclusion: What a noble life is the life of godliness! Godliness is "profitable unto all things," etc. (*Homilist.*) *How to meet God:*—In these ancient words, in very different phraseology indeed, we see a strikingly accurate and full anticipation of the very central teaching of Paul and his brother apostles, as to the way by which God and man come into union with one another. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth"—that joy is to be manifested by "working righteousness," but the joy which is the parent of righteousness is the child of something else—"those that remember Thee in Thy ways." If we ponder these words, and carefully mark their relation to each other, we may discern, as it were, a great staircase with three flights in it, and at the top God's face. I. WE HAVE TO BEGIN WITH THE LAST CLAUSE OF OUR TEXT. "Thou meetest him . . . that remembers Thee in Thy ways." The first stage on the road which will bring any man into, and keep any man in, contact with God, and loving fellowship with Him, is the contemplation of His character, as it is made known to us by His acts. God, like man, is known by His "fruits." You cannot get at a clear conception of God by speculation, or by thinking about Him or about what He is in Himself. Lay hold of the clue of His acts, and it leads you straight into His heart. But the act of acts, in which the whole Godhead concurs, in which all its depths and preciousness are concentrated, like wine in a golden cup, is the incarnation and life and death of Jesus Christ our Lord. But note that word "Remember," for it suggests the warning that such contemplation of the ways of the Lord will not be realized by us without effort. There are so many things within us to draw us away; the duties and joys and sorrows of life so insist upon having a place in our hearts and thoughts, that assuredly, unless by resolute effort, frequently repeated, we clear a space in this crowded and chattering market-place of life, where we can stand and gaze on the white summits far beyond the bustling crowd, we shall never see them, though they are visible from every place. Unless you try to remember, you will certainly forget. II. THE SECOND FLIGHT OF THIS GREAT STAIRCASE IS POINTED OUT IN THE FIRST CLAUSE OF MY TEXT. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth." That meditative remembrance of the ways of God will be the parent of holy joy which will bring God near to our heart. Alas, it is too often the very opposite of true that men's joys are such as to bring God to them. The excitement and often the impure elements that mingle with what the world calls "joy" are such as to shut Him out from us. But there is a gladness which comes from the contemplation of Him as He is, and as He is known by His "ways" to be, which brings us very near to God, and God very near to us. I think that we have largely lost the very thought that gladness is a plain Christian duty, to be striven after in the appropriate manner which my text suggests, and certainly

to be secured if we seek it in the right way. III. THE THIRD STAGE IS WORKING RIGHTEOUSNESS BECAUSE OF SUCH JOY. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and" —because he does—"worketh righteousness." Every master knows how much more work can be got out of a servant that works with a cheery heart than out of one that is driven reluctantly to his task. You remember our Lord's parable where He traces idleness to fear: "I knew thee that thou wast an austere man, gathering where thou didst not strew, and I was afraid, and I went and hid thy talent." No work was got out of that servant because "there was no joy" in him. The opposite state of mind—diligence in righteous work, inspired by gladness which in its turn is inspired by the remembrance of God's ways—is the mark of a true servant of God. And the gladness which is wholesome and blessed, and is "joy in the Lord," will manifest itself by efflorescing into all holiness and all loftiness and largeness of obedience. IV. WE HAVE THE LANDING-PLACE TO WHICH THE STAIR LEADS. God comes to such a man. He meets him indeed at all the stages, for there is a blessed communion with God that springs immediately from remembering Him in His ways, and a still more blessed one that springs from rejoicing in His felt friendship and Fatherhood, and a yet more blessed one that comes from practical righteousness. For if there is anything that breaks our communion with God, it is that there linger in our lives evils which make it impossible for God and us to come close together. Remember if there is the practice of evil there cannot be the sunshine of the presence of God. But remember, too, that the commonest, homeliest, smallest, most secular tasks may become the very highest steps of the staircase that brings us into His presence. Conclusion: There are two kinds of meeting God. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness," and that is blessed, as when Christ met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. There is another kind of meeting with God. "Who, making war, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Behold, Thou art wroth.**—*An obscure passage:*—Text obscure. Possibly, "Behold Thou wast wroth, and we sinned; Thy wrath was for ever, and we became transgressors." The general idea is that, through God's wrath long continued, the people have sunk ever deeper into sin (cf. chaps. lvii. 17, lxiii. 17; Koran, xxvii. 4). (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) "Behold, Thou, Thou wast enraged, and we stood as sinners; already we have long been in this state; and shall we be saved?" (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–8. **But we are all as an unclean thing.**—*Israel's uncleanness:*—"And we are all become as one unclean"—in a ceremonial sense, like the leper. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Lamentations of Isaiah:*—You have read some of the lamentations of Jeremiah; here is one of the lamentations of Isaiah. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Church's complaint and confidence:*—I. A HUMBLE CONFESSION OF SIN. 1. Of the sins of their nature, of their persons themselves. "We are all as an unclean thing." 2. Of the sins of actions. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags." 3. Of the sin of non-proficiency, of obduration, and senselessness, that notwithstanding the corrections of God, they were little the better. "There is none that calleth upon Thy name, or that stirs up himself to take hold of Thee." II. A HUMBLE COMPLAINT OF THE MISERABLE ESTATE THEY WERE IN BY THEIR SINS. "We all fade as a leaf," etc. III. A HUMBLE SUPPLICATION AND DEPRECATION TO GOD (ver. 8, etc.). (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *A comprehensive confession:*—This brief prayer is a combination of many types. Natural analogies are piled upon each other. The confession consists of six several but consecutive and closely connected parts. There is much meaning in each separate ingredient of this confession considered by itself, and more in the relations and union of the whole. I. THE TAINT OF SIN, that from the springs of humanity has poisoned all its streams. "We are all as an unclean thing." When one who has been convinced by the Spirit takes words and turns to God, he begins at the heart, as the spring whence the many unclean streams of thoughts and words and deeds flow out in the daily life. This simplicity is a mark of truth. II. THE WORTHLESSNESS AND POSITIVE LOATHSOMENESS OF ALL THE EFFORTS WHICH A SINFUL MAN CAN MAKE TO SET HIMSELF AT FIRST RIGHT WITH GOD. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Most naturally this ingredient of the confession comes next in order. He looked first to his sins, and told what he thought of them; he next looks to his righteousness. III. THE FRAILTY, UNCERTAINTY, AND SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE. "We all do fade as a leaf." IV. THE POWER AND SUCCESS OF INTERNAL CORRUPTION IN HURRYING THE MAN INTO ACTUAL SIN. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." It is

a mark of true repentance when the penitent lays all the blame upon himself. V. THE INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS OF THESE HELPLESS SINNERS, AS THEY ARE DRIFTING DOWN THE STREAM OF SIN TOWARDS THE GULF OF PERDITION, TO LIFT THEMSELVES UP AND TAKE HOLD ON GOD. "There is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." VI. GOD'S METHOD OF DEALING WITH SUCH A CASE. "Thou hast hid Thy face from us." The Holy One hides His face from His creatures while they live in sin. "And hast consumed us because of our iniquities." I prefer to take this clause in its most literal sense, as it is given in the margin—"Thou hast melted us by the hand of our iniquities." God melts the hardest sinners, and He employs their own sins to make the flinty hearts flow down. If this melting take effect in the day of grace, it is repentance unto life. But if the sinful are not so melted in the day of grace, they will be melted when that day is done. Their own sins on their own heads will be at least a material part of the doom of the lost in the great Day. After having looked to the text, we shall look at that which touches it, before and behind. The gem is the chief object of attraction, but its setting may be both beautiful and precious. The word that touches it on the one side (end of ver. 5) is, "We shall be saved;" the word that touches it on the other side (beginning of ver. 8) is, "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father." It is not by chance that this great deep confession lies between these two words—is held up and held out in these two tender, loving hands. "We are saved by hope," not by terror. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The banefulness of sin:*—I. SIN IS A DEFILING POWER. "We are all as an unclean thing." Sin makes the soul as unlovely as a man in filth. The soul ought not to be unclean. The stain of sin does not belong to it, it is separable from it. Once the soul had no stain. II. SIN IS AN IMPOVERISHING POWER. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Moral character is indeed the garment of the soul, the garment which it weaves out of its thoughts, emotions, purposes, and actual deeds. This garment ought to be one beautiful whole, and clean also. But through sin it is all in "rags." There is no unity, no wholeness, no completeness. It is all in tatters, and filthy tatters too. Sin indeed makes the soul ugly and hateful. How unlovely is every aspect of sin. III. SIN IS A WITHERING POWER. "We all do fade as a leaf." Sin blasts the hopes, pollutes the loves, curtails the liberty, dims the vision, deadens the conscience, and enfeebles all the faculties and powers of the soul. IV. SIN IS A VIOLENT POWER. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (*Homilist.*) *A sight of self:*—I. I HAVE TO DESCRIBE THE VIEW WHICH EVERY TRULY GRACIOUS SOUL WILL TAKE OF HIMSELF. 1. Every gracious soul who is truly enlightened by the Spirit has a clear sense of the root of all his guiltiness. He knows the plague of his own heart, and cries, "We are all as an unclean thing." He discovers that not merely his outward acts, but his very person is essentially sinful in the sight of God. 2. The spiritually enlightened man then perceives that all his actions are evil. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." If our righteousnesses are so bad, what must our unrighteousnesses be? 3. The enlightened heart into which the candle of the Lord hath shone, is led to see the failure and futility of all its resolutions to be better. "We all do fade as a leaf." Our best professions, hopes, resolutions, and pretensions—all of them fade like shadows, dreams, and fancies of the brain. 4. But the truly awakened soul knows a fourth thing, namely, that he is not in himself able to stand against the invasions of temptation, for the text has put it—"Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." When men find that their vows wither, yet they will still hang to their hopes, and to their moralities; but some strong temptation comes unexpectedly upon them just at the moment when their mind is susceptible of its power, and where are they? The temptation comes like a howling north wind at an unexpected moment, and where is your man now? Unable to resist, carried away by the very vice which he thought he had renounced. 5. Those souls upon whom God's sunlight had once shone are also painfully aware of their own natural weakness and slothfulness in prayer. "There is none that calleth upon Thy name," etc. 6. That soul which has once perceived itself in the black colours of its iniquity, has discovered that through sin it has lost all the favour and love of God which might have come if it had been without sin, for so saith the text, "For Thou hast hid Thy face from us," etc. It is no thing to play with—that hiding of God's face. When the prophet says, "Thou hast consumed us," it is a dreadful word. II. There is a danger I must warn you of, and that is—DO NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE MERE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS SO. You must not merely know that you are lost, but you must feel it. Do not be content with simply feeling that it is so, but mourn before

God that it is so, and hate yourself that it is so. Do not look upon it as being a misfortune, but as being your own wilful sin, and look upon yourselves, therefore, as being guilty sinners, condemned already, not only for all this, but condemned because you believe not on Christ, for that after all is the crowning condemnation. And when you really feel your sinfulness, and mourn it, do not stop here; never give yourself any rest till you know that you are delivered from it. III. THE TEXT SEEMS TO SUGGEST SOME PLEAS. Poor troubled soul, I am afraid thou canst not use the first one mentioned in the text—"Thou art my Father!" I am half afraid you have not faith enough for that, but if you have, what a prevailing plea it is! "My Father, I have sinned, but I am Thy son, though not worthy to be so called; my Father, by a father's love forgive, forgive Thine erring one; by the bowels of Thy compassion have mercy upon me!" You who have backslidden can plead this, for you know your adoption. But if that should be too hard for you, take the next plea. Say, "Lord, I am the clay and Thou the potter; I am helpless like the clay which cannot fashion itself; I am worthless like the clay that is of no value; I am filthy, Lord, like clay! I am only worthy to be trodden under foot, but Thou art the potter, and potters can make fine things even of clay. Here I am, Lord; I put myself into Thy hand. I am nothing; make me what Thou wouldst have me to be." Will not that plea suffice? But hark thee, sinner. There is a sweeter plea than any in the verse before us, for this is an Old Testament text; but I must take thee to the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for the plea that never fails. It is this, "Lord, it is written that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; if there was never a sinner in the world but one, that sinner I am. I trust myself in His hands to save me." It is done, it is done. You are saved; you are "accepted in the Beloved." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Confession of sin*:—1. The greatest and noblest souls, striving after the loftiest and divinest aims, have been most sensible of fault and failure in their lives, and have in their confessions borne hardest upon the weakness and sinfulness of human nature. Not when men are sunk in depths of vice and sensuality; but when they are struggling upwards to difficult, impossible heights of virtue and nobleness, are they seized with the "strong crying and tears" which pours itself forth in such language as this, in David's fifty-first psalm, in Paul's "I am the chief of sinners." It is not the utter depravity of human nature, but rather a rare goodness and nobleness which expresses itself in the language of confession, of which this is a specimen. 2. Read it thus, and it is true and simple. Apparently when the prophet wrote these words his countrymen had just returned from captivity, and were again established at Jerusalem—Jerusalem laid waste, and its crown and ornament, "the holy and beautiful house of God," trampled in the dust. Something had been learned by the captives in their long and miserable exile. There was a lesson taught them now by their desolate homes and overturned altars. But still, to an earnest and far-seeing mind, there was manifest the need of a much wider and deeper religious reformation than had yet been accomplished. Before the nation could be again what it once was, it had much to learn and much to unlearn. It was a superficial and partial work which adversity had yet done in the way of curing the evils which had brought adversity in their train. With painful certainty and distinctness this was evident to the prophet. His soul was burdened to think of it, and he burst out, in his grief, with the confession as for himself and his country—"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." 3. It is easy to imagine a prophetic mind of our own country and our own time using similar language to express similar feelings. We have a great deal to be proud of as a nation. Much that is British is great and noble. On the surface of things we appear to be a very religious, as well as an industrious and prosperous people. Our Protestant institutions are, no doubt, many of them admirable. But can you imagine any very sincere, penetrating, religious mind, one impressed little by material prosperity and sensitive to moral and spiritual conditions, looking beneath the surface of our national life, contemplating all the dishonesty in trade and manufactures, the corruption of morals among the rich, the low intelligence, superstition, vile tastes of the mob, the religious cant and conventionality, the bitter rivalry of sects, which exist along with our Protestant institutions, and not be forced to say—"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away"—we are not a great and glorious people; "we all do fade as a leaf"? As the language of confession—confession being the act not of the vile, but of the noble—we read this language, and the application of it to national life is plain. 4. In this light it is

no less easy to apply it to individual life and conduct. Strive to be true and good after the example of Christ, and it will be easy, perhaps, to satisfy both the world and the Church that you are successful in the endeavour; but if your aim is really to live Christ's life you will not so easily satisfy yourself—you will only at the best succeed far enough to be conscious of immeasurable failure. Compared with the good you ought to win, any good to which you attain will appear to you miserable failure. Thus, this language in its own light is easily seen to be true. In any other light it is false. He that doeth righteousness is righteous. I know that right things may be done from wrong motives, and with inferior views, and I know that they are not then of the same quality or value as if they were done from right impulses and with the highest aims. I know, too, that if a man breaks one of the commandments he is in a sense guilty of all, and cannot set himself up as a perfect man, or as a more deserving man than another who has broken all the ten. But then right is right, and wrong is wrong, be it in saint or sinner, and nothing can make these two opposites change places, or have the same character or issues. Wrong is eternally to be feared and hated; right is eternally to be loved and sought after. Suppose you know you are wrong in much, if there is anything in which you are right, do not consider that to be filthy rags—die rather than surrender it to force or fraud. It was not to render our righteousness superfluous, or to certify that any of our righteousness is worthless, that Christ lived and died; it was to make us truly righteous, to bind us in a new covenant with God our Father, to be the servants only of righteousness. (*J. Service, D.D.*)

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.—"*Filthy rags*":—"Rags" is a word that applies to worn and torn bits of cloth; when used otherwise to designate apparel, contempt is implied. The word employed by Isaiah has no such import. It is the same word that describes part of what Abraham's steward presented to Rebekah—"jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment." Are we to imagine that rags have any similarity to the gold and silver jewels, or are likely to be among the gifts offered in the name of a wealthy sheik to a gentle lady whose favour is sought as the bride of the son of promise? Besides, when a Hebrew meant "rags" he had a word for it. A proverb tells how "drowsiness shall clothe one with rags;" and here the word is very different from Isaiah's. Hence it is well that the revisers put "garment" instead of "rags" in the prophet's phrase, which may thereby become less striking and splenetic, but is certainly truer to the prophet's thought. It is not for translators to inject their own feelings into their author's words. Equally erroneous is the adjective "filthy," or even "polluted," as the revisers have it. It is, of course, admissible, and may be elegant to construe a governed noun as an adjective, as is the case here; but the adjective should be a congruous one at least. Isaiah's governed word has no reference whatever to filth. Had the expression been Zechariah's, where he speaks, with more force than courtesy, of Joshua's "dungy robes," no fault could be found with "filthy" as a rendering; for there is no question that either Joshua's robes are represented as literally smeared with filth, or else the prophet held them in as great disgust as if it had been so, just as Paul scorned even his privileges as "dung" compared with the blessings he enjoyed in Christ. If Isaiah had expressed the like scorn, it would have been fair so to put it; but as the translators had to add the contempt, it is plain they imported into their original what was not there. The word chosen by Isaiah denotes something over and above. Proof is something beyond one's bare word; and an ornament is something over and above what is plain. Our word, then, means proof, evidence, or witness, and also display or ornament. Besides, being plural, it has special emphasis. The literal rendering, then, is "a garment of testimonies, or of infallible proof;" or "a garment of ornaments, or of great display." To suggest adjectives for the governed nouns, the translation comes to be "an evidential article of clothing," or "a showy dress." The first of these interpretations was adopted by Aquila, a very old and apparently well-skilled translator, who improved upon the Septuagint. He gives "marturion" as the Greek equivalent; and on this Jerome has a note in which he observes, "This is testimoniorum," which means "of testimonies," and then goes on to refer to the Deuteronomic enactment concerning the scandal raised by a husband accusing his wife on the score of impurity before marriage. In such a case, a cloth smeared with blood, as it came from the injured woman's person, was a sufficient proof of pre-nuptial purity as well as of the consummation of matrimony. Looked at in this light, Isaiah's phrase has great capacity of suggestiveness. Our good deeds attest our inward and hidden intercourse with the Lord, and prove that with Him only in all purity we have had to do. But there is a stain even on our purest thoughts and deeds. Our second

interpretation, however, yields the better sense. It takes into account the previous clause; and, in the light of it, both clauses are thus paraphrased: "We are all like an unclean woman, and all our righteous acts like her showy attire." The meaning is simple and clear. Outward show takes the place of inward reality. Perhaps their loathing of the strumpet's airs begot contempt in the translators' hearts for anything that is describable in those terms. Their rendering reminds us of Zephaniah's indignant description of degenerate prophets: "Her prophets are debauched wretches—cloaks!" This corresponds with the old Scottish definition of a formal clergy—"toom tabards," that is, empty gowns, all cloak and nothing inside. The life is taken out of Zephaniah's fierce protest when it is smoothed down to "light and deceitful persons," as in the ordinary version. When David invites Israel's daughters to weep for Saul, he reminds them of the fashions of Saul's period, "with delights," referring to the modiste's art with a fine appreciation of a woman's weakness for finery; and the word is akin to Isaiah's "clothing of dazzling display." Here is "devotion's every grace, except the heart." The prophet seeks more heart and clean. (*H. Rose Rae.*)

We all do fade as a leaf.—*The lesson of the leaf*:—As Christ drew a lesson from the lily, so may we from the leaf. Yet the words of the prophet, "We all do fade as a leaf," may lead our thoughts in a different way from his. These words were originally spoken in lamentation over the wrecked glory of the temple and city of David, as devastated by Nebuchadnezzar with fire and sword. No fitter similitude of the sad change could the mourning prophet find than the faded leaf. Those dilapidated walls, those fire-scarred ruins of Jerusalem and Zion, brought to his mind the magnificent creations of the shepherd king and his illustrious son, only as the crushed and blackened leaf recalls the image of the glorious crown of spring. But to us the lessons of the fading leaf become spiritually instructive, as we bring to bear the light which science has afforded us respecting the nature and the uses of its short life, the meaning of its fading, and the real significance of its death. We learn that the reality is different from the seeming, both as regards the life of the leaf and its death. We find a nobler meaning in the life of the leaf, and that imparts a nobler meaning to its death. And the lesson thus derived brings us consolation and strengthening as we apply it to some of the sadder experiences of mortal life. (*J. M. Whiton, D.D.*) *Usefulness of the leaf*:—For the tree itself, says the botanist, the leaf is both stomach and lungs. 1. A single elm has been computed to possess in one summer five acres of leaves; each leaf a wonderful tissue of nerves and pores and cells and veins. In these countless cells, invisible to the unassisted eye, the sunlight enables the living plant to do its work. In these cells the mineral matter ascending from the roots dissolved in the sap, and the gaseous matter drunk in through the pores from the air, are mingled, and converted by the chemistry of the sunbeam into food for the tree. This then is carried by the leaf-veins into the twigs, adown the branches and the trunk, and is deposited under the bark in a ring of woody fibre. Another portion also goes to form the nutritious fruit and another the reproductive seed. Thus the frail leaf, gay, beautiful, musical as it is, is yet ever at God's work, providing man with material for the necessities, comforts and luxuries of his life. Most true, in creation as well as in redemption, is the apostle's saying, that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen." 2. But this is not all of the useful duty to which God has chosen the fair and short-lived leaf. The gas which the leaf-cell sucks from the air, and helps to change into fibre, is poisonous to animal life, and must not accumulate in the atmosphere. The same office that the coral insect performs for the sea, to keep the great fountain of waters pure, the leaf performs for that aerial ocean from whose pure tides we drink our life. A mark of dignity has the Creator bestowed on all useful labour, however humble, by giving the glory of the forest, and the beauty of the many-coloured coralline gardens beneath the waves, to organisms that discharge for Him the duty of scavengers! The carbonic acid gas produced by all our fires, and by the myriads of breathing creatures, is absorbed from the air by the leaf through its countless pores. In the leaf-cells, this noxious element is decomposed; part is worked up into food for the tree, and the residue, containing all that is fit for animals to breathe again, is given back to the vital air. Measure, if it were possible, by cubic feet of wood, all the trees upon the globe. Forty-five per cent. of the whole mass is the solidified poison of the atmosphere, extracted by the subtle chemistry of the leaf. How grandly beneficent is its humble life! 3. The leaf draws water from the ground through the thousands of tubes in its stem—eight hundred barrels, says a scientist, from every leaf-covered acre every twenty-four hours. This it gives out to the atmosphere in

the form of invisible vapour, to be condensed into clouds and fall in showers—the very water which, were it not for the leaf, would either escape in freshets or filter through the ground to the caverns below. Thus the leaf works to bring upon the earth the early and the latter rain. 4. And now comes on its change. It is a change that comes most naturally and honourably as the leaf fulfils its beneficent tasks. It is in and by its useful work that the leaf changes from the pulpy thing it was in May to a thing of firmer texture. And so we learn to look upon it rather as a ripening than a decaying, when, as its work draws near the end, it begins to borrow less from earth and more from heaven. The splendours of October, surpassing the tenderness of May, and the sober dignity of August, fitly crown the close of a life that has been so useful. (*Ibid.*) *Life and death:*—Let us now take up the truth taught us by the leaf into the higher regions of the experience of the soul. There, too, the reality may be other than the seeming. There, too, to rectify our view of life will be to rectify our view of death. What is the life of the leaf? The child replies: To dance in the sun, to play with the breeze, to listen idly to the song of birds. What, then, is its death? The loss of all for which it lived, faded beauty, a broken form, hurled from a proud and peaceful height into the mire of the street, a dishonoured and pitiable wreck. Nay, what is the life of the leaf? The teacher tells the child: To nourish the stock that bore it; to prepare abundant supplies for the life and the labours of man; the fuel that warms, the fruit that feeds, the roof that shelters, the vehicles of commerce by land and sea, that draw the nations into one, the sanctuaries vocal with a nobler praise than that which is warbled through the forest arches. It is to cleanse and vivify the vital air, and thus preserve in healthy vigour the blood of man and beast. It is to send the rain upon the pastures, that feed the cattle on a thousand hills, and on the cornfields that nourish the great family of mankind. What, then, is its death? It is the fulfilment of the good end it lives for, a growing hard and brown in beneficent work, a ripening through constant usefulness into the many-coloured tints of splendid autumn, a putting on of the God-given decorations of ennobled labour; it is a settling into an honoured grave all purpled like a king; it is a resigning of an outworn form to that Providence which treasures up each particle of faithful dust to enter into fresh forms of life and beauty in coming springs. How plainly we see here that different ideas of the purpose of the life lead to different ideas of what the death really is. If we would transform our thought of death, we must transform our thought of life. (*Ibid.*) *Lessons from the leaves:*—Three applications of the prophet's language—I. To MAN, AS HE IS A SINNER. Man's condition through sin is the primary idea. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." 1. The fading leaves are separated from the source of their life and growth and beauty. They are no longer in vital union with the root of the tree. They may hang for a while, but are sure speedily to fall. Any passing gust may carry them away. The soul of man through sin has lost spiritual union with God, the source of its true life, and has become faded and shrivelled through the separation. 2. The fading leaves yield no response to, receive no benefit from, the natural influences that act upon them for their life and growth. The prophet says of Israel, "There is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." 3. The fading leaves, as they fall from the tree, are out of their true sphere, and exposed to all degrading forces. The prophet has in his mind leaves that had faded unnaturally, and that should still have lived in greenness and beauty upon the tree. Lying on the ground, trampled down by man and beast, when they should have been waving high like a warrior's plume. Man through sin has fallen from his true sphere. He is the sport of evil passions, subject to all degrading and hurtful forces. The emblem of his condition is a faded, fallen leaf, whirled about by the winds, trampled down and tossed about by man and beast. 4. The fading leaves are practically useless and worthless. They are of no value to the tree, nor yet to man. A sinner is one who renders no true and intelligent service to his God, and brings no real benefit to the great tree of humanity. II. To MAN, AS HE IS MORTAL. In man, as in nature, the same law of decay is acting. III. To MAN, AS HE IS A CHRISTIAN BELIEVER. Reversing the picture, and excluding the prophet's application, there is hope and consolation spoken by the fading leaves. 1. The fading leaves have fulfilled the purpose of their being and life. The Christian, whether he fade soon or late, has not lived in vain. 2. The fading leaves are clothed with the richest and most varied colours. The Christian, as life is closing, often shines with a spiritual richness and lustre never seen before. 3. The fading leaves tell of the infinite skill and care of the Creator. Wonderful is the interest God takes in His people. "Not one falleth to the ground without your

Father." 4. The fading leaves do not perish. They come back in other forms, and serve other uses. The Christian can take higher and surer ground. He shall live again, live the being he now is, live never again to fade. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Fading leaves:*—I. LEAVES FADE GRADUALLY. The whole foliage of a tree does not fade and pass away at one time. Some leaves droop and wither even in spring, when the rest of the foliage is in its brightest and most luxuriant beauty. Some are torn away in summer, while green and full of sap, by sudden and violent storms. The great majority fade and fall in autumn; while a few cling to the branches all through the cold and desolation of winter, and are at last pushed off by the unfolding buds of the following spring. And is it not so with every generation? Decay and death everywhere and always reign. But all do not fade at the same time. Some die in the spring of life; some are cut off suddenly, by accidents and fatal diseases, in ripe manhood; some fade naturally in the autumn of old age. A few survive their generation, like the last red leaves that rustle mournfully in the winter wind on the topmost bough of the tree. Friend after friend departs, family after family disappears, until the mournful record shall be written of us as it was written of the Hebrews of old—"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." II. LEAVES FADE SILENTLY. All the processes of nature are silent and secret. It is God's glory to conceal a matter. And so silently do we all fade. III. LEAVES FADE DIFFERENTLY. The autumnal foliage is very varied. No two species of trees exhibit the same appearance. And are there not similar differences in the way in which men fade and die? In the hey-day of life and happiness they may seem all alike, uniformly fair and attractive. But when death comes, it shows the true character of each. Its approach makes some men gloomy and sombre. It invests them with a dark and repulsive aspect. It clothes them with despair. But how widely different is the dying of the Christian! The idea of death to them has nothing death-like in it. IV. LEAVES FADE CHARACTERISTICALLY. The foliage that is gloomiest in its unfolding, is most unsightly in its decay; and the leaves that have the richest and tenderest shade of green in April, have the most brilliant rainbow hues in October. The leaf of the sad and sullen ash is the last to kindle its bud, and the first to wither and fall; and its colour, always sombre, becomes blackened and disfigured in decay. The leaf of the linden tree, on the contrary, is beautiful from first to last; softly green in spring; fragrant in summer with delicate frankincense, and musical with the hum of bees, revelling in the honey-dew bloom; and gorgeous as a sunset-cloud in autumn. And so is it with man. He dies as he lives. A life of godliness ends in a saintly death; and a career of worldliness and sin terminates in impenitence and despair. And as the fading itself is characteristic, so also are the results of the fading. The leaves of some trees when they fall, leave no trace whatever behind. The scar left by their removal heals immediately; and on the smooth, naked bark of the bough, in winter, there is no mark to indicate that it was once covered with foliage. There are other trees, however, on which the scars are permanent. Many of the characteristic markings on the stems of palm-trees and tree-ferns are due to the permanence of these scars, when their leaves have decayed and dropped off. And is not the lesson of analogy here very clear and impressive? How many there are who fade and drop off from the tree of humanity, and leave no trace of their existence behind. Others there are, large-minded and large-hearted men, who live not for themselves, but for the glory of God and the good of their fellow-creatures; these when they fade and drop off the tree of life, leave behind them an impression which time will only make deeper. V. LEAVES FADE PREPAREDLY. No leaf falls from the tree—unless wrenched off suddenly and unexpectedly in early growth by external violence—without making due preparation for its departure. Before the slightest discoloration is seen upon it, there is a secret adequate provision made by nature for the inevitable hour of its passing away. Side by side with it, even in its summer beauty and luxuriance, it carries the memorial at once of its death and of a new birth. It bears the young bud that is to usurp its place in its bosom, and nourishes it with its own expiring life. This law of the vegetable kingdom is one that knows no exception. No leaf drops till a new one is prepared to take its place; no flower perishes till its house is made ready and filled with seeds. Alas, how different is it in human economy! Provision for the future is with man not the law, but the exception, of his conduct. Should we not imitate the example of the leaf in which the process of preparation for the future keeps pace with the process of decay? (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Leaves:*—I. THIS LEAF TEACHES US THE GOSPEL OF SERVICE. It has lived, it has had its day. It falls to perish by the wayside, but it has not lived in vain. When that leaf breathes it takes up

carbon and exhales oxygen. When we breathe we take in oxygen. You could not live without the leaf. It keeps the atmosphere pure. It prevents it from becoming poisonous. You are indebted to the leaf for your life. But you say, "That, after all, is but a selfish life; the leaf takes up what it requires, and it throws off what it does not require. Where is your gospel of service in that?" Yes; but it does something else; while feeding itself, it also feeds the tree upon which it grows. It is making the timber as well as satisfying its own needs. Without leaves we should have no wood for our houses, our furniture, or our fires. They die, leaving others to carry on their uncompleted work, but they always build firm, and straight and beautiful. So this little preacher says to us, "Live for great purposes, build for the future. You are but one unit in the great mass of living, toiling men, but remember that you can do a work for the generations to come. Leave the world fairer, and better, and stronger, and sweeter because you have lived. Men die, but man remains. You will go as your fathers have gone before you, but Society will remain behind." And then there is such a thing as service continuing after death. "Dead and done with" is not true of a leaf, much less of a man. The scientist tells us how by its decay the leaf is changed into vegetable mould, indispensable for the life of other leaves. Thus the decay of vegetation prepares the way for a new vegetation, and death prepares for life. So also is not a man done with when he is dead. There are many who rule from their graves. II. THIS LEAF ALSO PREACHES TO MEN THE GOSPEL OF A TRIUMPHANT DEATH. How beautiful Nature is, even in decay! Like an Indian warrior chief, she gathers around her her finery in order to meet death. So the gospel that the leaf has to teach us is a hopeful and a bright one. It is the lesson of triumphant death. After this life, another. "How are the dead raised, and with what manner of body do they come?" is an old question. Where will the leaves of next spring come from? Is it a more wonderful thing to clothe the living soul with a new body than to clothe the apparently dead tree with a new and beautiful foliage? (*S. Horton.*)

Withered leaves:—I. THE LEAF FADES SURELY. If there is one thing more absolutely and infallibly certain than another, it is that we all die (Gen. iii. 19; Heb. ix. 27). We die at every age. II. THE LEAF FADES SOON. Some kinds of leaves last longer than others; but, as a class, their natural life is a single summer. There is prodigality in this. If economy of life were aimed at, the leaf might last much longer than it does. So might the May-fly. So might man. 1. What a testimony to the wealth of creative energy! 2. What an argument in favour of economizing time! 3. What a spur to the life of watchfulness! III. THE LEAF FADES WHEN THE ENDS OF ITS EXISTENCE HAVE BEEN SERVED. "None of us liveth to himself;" nor could we if we would. IV. WHEN THE LEAF FALLS IT PROVIDES MATERIALS FOR THE FOLIAGE OF ANOTHER YEAR. The fall of a leaf and its decay are not the end of it or of its work. There is something still for it to do, and which it never could do till then. Decaying leaves are the earth's great fertilizers. The thing we do is immortal whatever its moral quality. The father, the mother, live again in children moulded by their influence. Of all responsibilities there is none so terrible as this. We are contributing, by our life, a poison or a honey drop to the life-cup of posterity. (*J. Edgar Henry, M.A.*) *The frailty of man:*—I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO DISCOVER WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE DESCRIPTION OF DEATH GIVEN US IN THESE WORDS. 1. We fade, like the leaves, soon. 2. Quickly. 3. The approaches of death may be lovely. The woods are never more beautiful than during the brief period of autumnal change. So our time of decay may be more beautiful than our summer time of health and activity, and "nothing in our life become us like the leaving of it." The hoary head becomes a crown of glory,—the patience of the Christian vanquishing the temptations to petulance and repining that affliction presents,—the hope of the believer shining clear and steady when he knows that he must soon depart,—are things that often give to the approaches of death more interest and loveliness than life has enjoyed. 4. "We all do fade as a leaf" in point of certainty. 5. How wide is the empire of death, and how many he has brought into his dark dominions; in every track the leaves are falling, and no favoured portion of the country escapes the general desolation. How many autumns has death had among men since first his reign began! Our fathers, where are they? Where are those hordes of painted barbarians, whose savage courage stayed so long the progress of the Roman legions? Where are those who erected in our land those ancient piles that were dedicated to the worship of God amid the darkness of the Middle Ages? Where are those who led the devotions there, and those who joined in them? Where are they who but a hundred years ago ploughed the fields that you now cultivate,

listened to the Gospel that is now proclaimed to us, and walked in the paths that we are accustomed to tread? They are gone, and we are going fast. II. THE PRACTICAL USE THAT SHOULD BE MADE OF THE TRUTH BROUGHT BEFORE US IN THE TEXT. The great lesson we should learn is to make ready for our fading time. But there are various circumstances that go far to account for this very common, almost universal forgetfulness of death. First, one cause may be, that we see little of the sick and dying. In the next place, death has no periods corresponding to the general fall of the leaf. Again, when we are in the enjoyment of good health, we feel nothing death-like about us. Then our worldly employments accustom our minds to a different train of thinking from that more serious one which brings death to our view, and tend to turn our thoughts from it. But the chief cause of the forgetfulness of death is to be found in the systematic attempt that is made by most men to banish the remembrance of it from their minds. (*W. Dickson.*) *The natural frailty and moral instability of man:*—This affecting declaration of the prophet may be considered with reference—I. To THE NATURAL VIGOUR OF MAN. II. To THE MORAL BEAUTY OF MAN. That goodness which natural conscience, enlightened by the words of revelation, produces; that goodness which is the effect of imitation, and the offspring of moral rather than pious principles; and of conviction rather than conversion; is fading as the frailest leaf of the frailest plant, and transient as the morning cloud and the early dew. Let it be exposed to the wintry blasts of adversity, or to the scorching sun of persecution; place it in the cold atmosphere of the world; and let the chilling influence of the world's indifference be felt by it—and what appearance does it assume? It is fading as a leaf. If your goodness fades as a leaf, have you not much need of being born of that incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever? But even then you will feel yourselves subject to a measure of the same instability and decay. For the words of the text and the whole passage in which they are found seem to be a description, not of careless sinners without grace, but of the people of God, in all the declensions to which they are liable in their best estate. (*M. Jackson.*) *Autumn:*—The falling leaves speak to us—I. OF THE ABIDING SUPERINTENDENCE OF GOD. "Leaves have their time to fall." They do not come and go at haphazard. They have lived, and now they fade and die, subject to His laws who sweetly ordereth all that is. The orderly return of the seasons tells how this is no haphazard world. God keeps His hand on all forces, material and spiritual. II. OF FULFILLED PURPOSE. Just as neither their rise nor fall, their springing nor fading was accidental, so their life is not a vague, aimless thing. There was design in their creation, and as they silently sink to the earth they speak to us of a life's work done. What have they done? 1. They have given added charm and beauty to the world. Here is a mission we may all well covet to fill, and which we may all fill. Whatever our position in life, however poor or lowly, we may so be and live that this shall be morally a fairer world because we are in it. 2. By their shade and shelter they have rendered valuable service to man and beast. So many around us are weary under the burden and heat of life's day. Many a struggling man, and many a frail, lonely, overwrought woman knows all too well what this life-weariness means. Let the mission of the leaves be ours. 3. They have played an important part in purifying the atmosphere. They say to us, "So live that when you fade and fall like us you may have done your part to make the world purer." III. OF LIFE'S CLOSE. (*R. M. Spoor.*) *Autumn:*—And how often does a leaf fade sooner than it falls! And is it not so with man? If spared, how soon does he begin to discover infirmities! But to enable us to judge properly in this case, and to vindicate the Divine perfections and providence, let us remember—1. That this state of frailty and vanity was not the original state of man, but the consequence of transgression. 2. That it is not his only state. There is another life to which the present is introductory, and in connection with which it should always be considered. 3. The vanity and brevity of the present life, if wisely improved, is advantageous with regard to the future. It furnishes us with no inconsiderable proof of a world to come. 4. This frail life, too, is continually guarded by a wise and tender Providence. Reflections: If life be like a fading leaf, let us regard it accordingly. Let it prevent despair. If life be short, thy troubles cannot, O Christian, be long. Let us also repress fear. It is little the most powerful can do, and before they strike they may fall. (*W. Jay.*) "*Hints of failing health*":—In the preface to his "Data of Ethics," Mr. Herbert Spencer says (1879) that he has been led to deviate from his original plan and publish this volume rather than go on with his general system of philosophy.

Why? Because "hints of failing health" remind him that he may not be able to finish the entire work, and he therefore wishes to make sure of the most important part. Oh that men would act on this principle as regards the salvation of their souls! (*T. R. Stevenson.*) "*We all fade as a leaf*":—1. He means, first, in regard of ceremonial performances that were without vigour and spirit of true devotion. There was no spirit in their legal performances. They were dead, empty things. Therefore when judgment came they were as leaves. So an idle, careless hearer, when judgment comes, all is as leaves. 2. So it is true in regard of mortality, the vanity of health and strength. We all as a leaf fade away when God's judgments come to nip us. Men are as leaves; as the leaves now in autumn fall, and there is a new generation in the spring. 3. For all idle performances, that have not a foundation in substantial piety, they are all as leaves. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) "*As the leaf*":—I. LIKE THE FOLIAGE, WE FADE GRADUALLY. Little by little. Pain by pain. Less steady of limb. Sight not so clear. Ear not so alert. After a while we take a staff. Then, after much resistance we come to spectacles. Instead of bounding into a vehicle, we are willing to be helped in. At last the octogenarian falls. II. LIKE THE LEAF WE FADE, TO MAKE ROOM FOR OTHERS. Next year's forests will be as grandly foliaged as this. So, when we go others take our spheres. Do not be disturbed as you see good and great men die. When God takes one man away, He has another right back of him. III. AS WITH THE LEAVES WE FADE AND FALL AMID MYRIADS OF OTHERS. IV. AS WITH VARIETY OF APPEARANCE THE LEAVES DEPART, SO DO WE. You have noticed that some trees, at the first touch of frost, lose their beauty. So death smites many. There is no beauty in their departure. One sharp frost of sickness, or one blast of the cold waters and they are gone. No tinge of hope. No prophecy of heaven. Their spring was all abloom with bright prospects; their summer thick foliaged with opportunities; but October came and their glory went. But, thank God, that is not the way people always die. Tell me, on what day of all the year the leaves of the woodbine are as bright as they are to-day? So Christian character is never so attractive as in the dying hour. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Fading away*:—But although spiritual decay may be the literal application of these words, they truly express the universal law of our mortal life. I. THE LEAF FADES BY A NECESSARY LAW. There is no power that can keep the foliage on the tree. So we must decay. Man may and does dread death; he may and does seek to prolong life; but he cannot by any invention or art counteract that resistless law of decay that has swept all past generations to the dust, and that is day after day, and hour after hour, working out his dissolution. II. THE LEAF FADES BY A GRADUAL PROCESS. So it is with life. In infancy, childhood, manhood, as well as old age, the fading process goes on. The gradualness of decay is a blessing. It allows time to prepare for the future. It prevents a stand-still in the machinery of the world's work. III. THE LEAF FADES INTO ITS PRIMITIVE ELEMENTS. It is only organized dust. It falls and to dust it returns. So it is with man. These bodies will in a few years be trodden on by the beast or borne away by the winds. What a great variety there is in the foliage of nature. Some leaves are larger and decked in more lovely hues than others. Some grow in a richer soil, and are breathed on by more salubrious winds than others. But let a few weeks pass away and all these distinctions will be lost, all will be dust. It is ever so in society. We see there great variety. Some are in wealth, some in poverty; some in velvet, some in fustian; some in beauty, some in deformity; some in the pomp of power, and some in the misery of oppression. But let a few years pass round, and our princes and peasants, sovereigns and subjects, despots and serfs, masters and menials will be dust. IV. THE LEAF FADES AS PREPARATORY TO A NEW LIFE. The leaf falls, but its place is soon supplied. It falls, in fact, because the new life, rising from the root, has pushed it off. So with us. We die, but others will step into our place, and the world will go on. The race will carry on its governments, its commerce, its literature, its religion, without our help. It may require our death, make our very death serve its interests. Let us, then, not be proud of our position. V. THE LEAF FADES AS A PROGRESSIVE STAGE OF LIFE. The tree from which the leaf fell is not dead. It threw off the sere leaf to put on another and lovelier garment. As the vitality of the tree continues when the leaf falls, the life of man will remain when the body dies. And like the tree, that life will dress itself in another garb. I would call your attention to four states of mind existing in relation to this fact, one of which must be yours—1. Unreasoning indifference. "Oh that men were wise that they would consider their latter end!" 2. Intellectual stoicism. There are some who look at death as the end of existence. It must be done, by reasoning.

down reason into folly, mind into matter, God into nature. How few can do this; and when they do it, have they rest? 3. Terrible foreboding. 4. Christian composure. Which of these states of mind in relation to our approaching mortality is the rational one? I need not ask which is the happiest one; that is obvious. (*Homilist.*) *Fading and changing* (with 1 Cor. xv. 51):—We know how many signs and symptoms there are in life which suggest the truthfulness of the figure. You cannot take a hill now as once you could. It makes your breathing a burden, and the slightest incline wearies and tires you out. It all means the fading leaf! Your eyes are giving you trouble. The glasses that served you ten years ago are of little use to you now. It is the fading leaf! You very frequently have to ask your friends to repeat their words. You are inclined to think it is because they mumble and murmur their speech. Nay, it is the fading leaf! There is your memory. Lately it has begun to play tricks with you, a thing it has never done before. It is the fading leaf! All these are signs, common signs, that the prime has been reached, that the leaf has begun to fade. "We all do fade as a leaf." Such is the Old Testament conception of life—a fading leaf. Is it a complete conception, or is it only partial and fragmentary? It is the conception of the Old Testament, is it the conception of the New? So far I have only given you one half of my text. Now let me give you the other half. I have taken it from Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "We shall all be changed." Now put the two conceptions side by side. "We all do fade as a leaf;" "We shall all be changed." The Old Testament prophet looked upon men and women who were beginning to feel the weaknesses and infirmities of age, and he said, "They are beginning to fade." The New Testament prophet looked upon men and women becoming burdened with similar weaknesses, and he said, "They are beginning to change." "Fading" is the Old Testament word; "changing" is the word of the New; and in the two words you will find the characteristic differences in the two conceptions. One looks at the body; the other looks at the soul. Here is a flower-bud, in its early stages encased in its wondrous sheath of green. After a while the sheath begins to open, to turn back, to droop and to die. Isaiah looks at the drooping sheath, and says, "Fading." Paul looks at the unfolding flower, and says, "Changing." One looks at the body which can fade; the other looks at the soul, the unfolding life, which can change but never fade. One looks at the vesture, the other looks at the man. Now we know which is the Christian standpoint. Christianity warns us again and again not to confuse the man's body with the man, but always to distinguish between them, and to make the distinction a vital and influential article of our faith. When some one has passed away, the inquiry is often made by one friend of another, "When are they going to bury him?" Bury *him?* Never! *He* cannot be buried! He is not here to be buried; he is risen! Bury *him?* No, you bury *it;* you bury his body, you bury that which has faded; you cannot bury the man. Well, why not make that distinction as real in speech as it ought to be real in faith? I am told that "Mr. So-and-So is in a decline." What do you mean? Do you mean that the man's body is declining, or the man? Immediately you reply, "The man's body." Then why not keep the distinction to the front, that when little children hear you speak, they may catch one of the cardinal doctrines of your faith. The New Testament always keeps the two distinct. It speaks of the body, the flesh, as a house; it speaks of the spirit, the soul, as its tenant. The same distinction is made by another figure. The New Testament describes my body as a robe. Look at that. Here are outer garments of cotton and wool. Then there is another garment of flesh. And then there is the soul, the man, the woman! That is the Christian conception—the flesh is the garment, it is not the man! Tell your children that growing old and infirm just means that the flesh garment is getting worse for wear, and that the soul is preparing for itself another garment that will never wear out, a spiritual garment, a garment of immortality and light! Tell them that death just means that the spirit has dropped its old clothes, its robe of flesh, and has clothed itself with the garment that is from heaven. This is a beautiful conception, this apostolic conception of change. It takes our eyes away from the temporal and fixes them upon the eternal. It takes the emphasis away from the fading body and fixes it upon the changing spirit. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Autumnal characteristics:*—I. IN THE MUTE ORGANS OF THE FADED LEAVES IS A TENDER WARNING. God turns every hill-side and meadow into an allegory. The tiny little monarch grappled with life, captured the forces of nature, and vigorously ministered all summer. But feebleness is creeping over it, it grows weary, its lustre is fading, nerves waxing weak. It rustles, it trembles in the gentle zephyr, and then

falls. "As the flowers of the field so man flourisheth." How tenderly God begins to warn us of the coming king of terrors. Each leaf carries its own secrets, giving no premonition which shall first fade. So tender is God's mighty providence! No harsh voice calls out, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." The messenger comes in a little rheum, a periodic pain, a little exhaustion of breath, fainting moments, the love of ease, the failing of memory, and little changes in the disposition. God hides the grim visage of fatality under shadows. But the angel of death is absolutely there. II. ON THE LEAF TWO FORCES ARE EVER AT WORK: THE VITALIZING OR ORGANIZING, AND THE DISSOLVING OR DECAYING. The coal-beds of the earth tell the story of the battles of these powers contending for the supremacy. There are the generations of the faded and fallen, metamorphosed, petrified, stratified. There are some leaves whose very luxury causes them to decay. This is one of the mysteries of life among men. The brilliant geniuses endowed with courage to inspire, intelligence to enlighten, and sensibility to refine, being first misunderstood and then misrepresented, contradicted, or embittered by neglect, their very richness of soul and fatness of mind cause them to sicken under the pale hand of languor. There are some gorgeous leaves which carry in themselves the beauty of the blossom and leaf together. They die early. There is the young scholar, gorgeous in intellect, prematurely ripening. His youth is adorned with loveliness. Of the wealth of his graces we have but the prophecy in the bud. He has a face like a cherub, and God sends His angel to pluck it while it is unsullied by the scorching sun or the chills of autumn. At the other extreme is gorgeous old age. III. There is a process of injecting colour into the fibres of plants to make them bright or sombre as one may wish. Thus affected, THE LEAVES FADE DIFFERENTLY. There is also a method of inoculating the life of man. To the character can be given the bright tints of pleasure as of those who delight in goodness. When the heart is inoculated with the graces of Christ the perspective of the character is determined, the sombre shades of despondency are transfigured. Some leaves are flabby and develop a gloomy, morbid colour. They wither and decay as unsightly things. Except for the grace of God, men born in a murky moral atmosphere gather cloudiness and opacity as they grow older and perish in gloom. Some leaves are beautiful from first to last. Like Samuel, they are dedicated from birth to a whole life in the ministry of goodness. Such is many a Christian life. The innocency of youth is beautified by a gracious spirit. Middle life comes on in the strength of a righteous character. IV. LEAVES IN FADING DEVELOP SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS. Each species has its peculiar tints. This represents the racial types of men in the development of their spiritual or mental traits. When they come to fade and to die the individual trends of character come forth in colours widely differing. The fatalism of the Chinaman is joyless and fearless, a dogged indifference. The pantheism of the Brahmin brings its devotee to sink into a gradual sleep, a dull withering. The Mohammedan, whose heaven is sensual, has spasms of fearful passion. The Catholic, who has been taught that ceremonies save him, in dying eagerly longs for a priest, a cross, or extreme unction. The agnostic comes to his end glowing in the white heat of apprehension. The true Christian has the face of one going home. Again, family groups have their differentiation. On a given tree, all the leaves are fashioned after a common type in colour, form, and texture. But as they grow they acquire individual oddities. Even so, one family of people, nurtured by the sap of a common civilization, develop the most striking idiosyncrasies. V. THERE IS NO DISGRACE IN FADING. Grey hairs are a crown of glory when they are anointed with goodness. If we have made good use of the sunshine, if the fruit of our labour hangs in clusters on the vine, if in God's vineyard we have faithfully ministered, then the fading tints are our laurels. The fading shows two powers. The spirit that animates the form is preparing the old trunk for dissolution. Yet while it unties the twisted cords of earthly life it lifts up the affections, dislodging the corruptible from the incorruptible, the mortal from the immortal, and spiritualizes the mind. In one case the man goes on walking with God until the fire of the flesh dies out, and the spirit is left aglowing. In the other, passions may burn the soul into a cinder. Richness in fading leaves is not an accident. It depends on sunshine, atmosphere and soil. The beauty of age is the fruit of right character. It is the result of effort. VI. The leaf fades, falls, and becomes buried. But IN THE CORE OF THE RIPE LEAF WHILE PULSATING IN THE SUNLIGHT, A JOYOUS YET MYSTERIOUS SOMETHING PASSES THROUGH THE STEM TO THE TWIG UPON THE STURDY BOUGH. It leaves there a scar, the sign of the leaf's immortality, a nucleus of the new life to bud in the resurrection of the spring. Among leaves are four degrees of future life. The first but lightly marks the place of its departure, a mere

trace as of a tear on a cheek not washed. Inward life swells the branch and its memory is blotted out. The second class leaves a scar which is not effaced, but no active life will come out of its grave. The third will raise a little knoll and stamp its epitaph indelibly as by a signet. No luxury of growth or biting frost can remove it. These little monuments are the geometric scales on the bark of the palm and the fern. The fourth class not only scar the tree, but leave behind the conditions of a new germ which will bud and become a new branch. Here is a perfect emblem of four classes of men. The first is the class who live only to themselves. The second class are generous, liberal-hearted, and full of noble deeds. They have a memory in their own times, but die with those who had personal knowledge of them. The third class send down their roots into the soil of future generations. They in-web their deeds in the fibre of history. They build institutions of charity, bequeath to posterity resources which will develop a better manhood. They are a sort of lepidodendron leaves. Their scale-marks are fixed. The fourth class inspire new buds. They are the great thinkers. Out of them come new branches of civilization. But some leaves have a small eternity. Thousands of years ago they built great forests and bogs. They faded and fell. Earthquake catastrophes buried them, and their graves are the coal-beds. To-day they have a resurrection. The sun-power caught by the leaves millions of years ago, to-day warms our homes, lights our streets, and creates thousands of industries for the elevation of man. (*T. Parry, D.D.*) *The evanescence of human life*:—Let us follow the suggestions which our text furnishes upon—I. THE CAUSES OF HUMAN DECAY. Why should not man, and everything connected with him, be immortal? 1. His present state seems to support a date to its existence. He is a member of a mortal world, and its entire economy seems to suppose and inexorably to work out his mortality. Everything announces its own dissolution. The granite rock, which you would look upon as indestructible, at length gives way, and crumbling down, forms the very soil you till. So, too, in the vegetable world, whether among the frosts of the polar regions, or amid the unvarying warmth of tropical climes. Thus, also, is it in the animal kingdom. Here, everything is limited in its capabilities of life and growth. 2. Life has its friction which tasks its powers and wears them out. 3. Then, with the friction of a life of toil comes often the severe discipline of a life of care, vexation and disappointed hopes. 4. But more common and trying than even this is the discipline of pain to which life on earth is subject. 5. But there is still one more waster of life on earth. Sinful pleasure sets its saddest seal upon the swollen or wasted, the scarred and the disgraced form that comes under its blighting touch. 'Tis sad to see the beautiful plant, which you have nurtured with care, struck with frost before its time; but how much more saddening to see the human form disfigured even in the days of its youth and strength by sinful excesses! II. THE CERTAINTY OF HUMAN DECAY. How certainly our life on earth fades and decays, we may learn from the variety and the constant action of those causes of decay which we have now noticed. The law of nature under which we live is an inexorable law; and this law works out our decay. III. THE RESULTS OF THIS UNCEASING, THIS INEVITABLE PROCESS. 1. Human beauty decays. 2. Human activity flags. 3. Human strength fails. 4. The human intellect fails. The intellect we believe immortal; yet it is true that in this world that intellect is dependent upon physical organs for its successful exertions, and still more so for the manifestation of its power. All old men are obliged to show, if not confess, that they can no longer think and plan as they could in the days of their strength. 5. Human affections feel and show this withering process. 6. One other step only is yet to be taken in this journey of decay. That leaf, which for days has been turning pale, clinging still, though tremblingly, to its hold on life, at last falls, not only faded, but dead. And so, too, is it to be with us. (*E. B. Huntington.*) *A leaf exposed to a thousand dangers*:—Insects gnaw it off, the beasts of the field may devour it, winds may scatter it, or it may be shaken down with the fruit. And, between the diseases and accidents to which human nature is liable, comparatively few attain old age. The Jews formerly reckoned up nine hundred and three diseases, but accidents are absolutely innumerable. A vapour may cause death, our houses may bury us in their ruins, our food may poison us. (*W. Jay.*) *The beauty of fading life*:—It is under the approaches of the autumnal chill and frost that Faith puts on her beautiful apparel; Hope, her queenly robes; Love, her wedding garment, as the heavenly Bridegroom's steps draw near. The richest manifestations of character; the communings that can never be forgotten; the heroic forms of devotion and submission; the outgoings of affection too intense for utterance, overflowing from

the faltering tongue on eye and lip and brow,—these belong to the chamber of illness and the bed of death. (*A. P. Peabody.*) **Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.**—*Sin a cruel tyrant:*—When God leaves us in the hand of our sins, He leaves us in a cruel hand. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. **And there is none that calleth upon Thy name.**—*Neglected religion:*—1. There is a confession of neglected privilege and duty. "There is none that calleth upon Thy name." 2. There is a definition of true and saving religion. "That stirreth himself up to take hold of Thee." This latter is the most striking and important, for it shows what a man must do in order to approach God, the act requiring exertion and activity. Multitudes of so-called Christians live on without the semblance of devotion, while with many more this worship is a mere matter of form. I. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES? There are many things which operate to make a man neglect God. 1. Devotion to the world. No man can serve two masters, and he who loves the world cannot consistently love God. 2. Selfish indulgence. There are many who do not, strictly speaking, love the world, who nevertheless so pamper their bodies with temporal comforts that they sink down into a dreamy sloth. 3. Want of desire. Deadness of soul makes a man sluggish. If we keep out of the sunshine, we cannot feel its warmth. If men hide from God, they can neither desire nor love Him. II. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES? A terrible roll-call of iniquity and sin. Evil rolls on like the waves of the troubled sea. Prayerless souls are marching on to perdition; Satan triumphs over the ungodly world; God is dishonoured; angels weep. III. WHAT IS THE REMEDY? Such reflections ought—1. To arouse us to new efforts in prayer. 2. To excite us to greater personal efforts. We can all do something. Many can do much. 3. To awaken us to indirect work. We can send others to preach and to labour. 4. To see that we ourselves are not among those who fail to take hold, and that our personal example is not hindering the progress of the truth. (*Homilist.*) *Neglect of prayer:*—This chapter may be considered as an act of humiliation and confession by the prophet, in behalf of the Jews, similar to that in the ninth chapter of Daniel. In the text he aggravates their other crimes by that of hypocrisy, for he does not mean by the expression that none called upon or prayed to God at all, but that they did not do it spiritually, heartily, fervently. The last clause in the sentence explains (as is common in the prophetic writings) the former. "None calleth upon Thy name;" that is, "None stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." I. PRAYER, PROPERLY SO CALLED, CONSISTS IN CERTAIN EXERCISES OF THE MIND. 1. Attention to our wants. Without this, prayer is vain babbling. Our wants arise from our sinful conduct—our unholy nature—powerful opposition—daily circumstances in our experience. Our state ought to be as diligently attended to as the most assiduous tradesman attends to his business—as the humane physician attends to the symptoms of disease in his patient. 2. Regard to God as the Being who alone can relieve us. 3. Strong and fervent desire. 4. Affiance in God. 5. Humble and patient expectation. II. HOWEVER FREQUENTLY OR FORCIBLY WE PRAY, IF OUR PRAYERS ARE SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM THESE EXERCISES, WE SHALL BE REGARDED BY GOD AS THOUGH WE NEVER PRAYED AT ALL—THAT IS, WE SHALL DERIVE NO BENEFIT FROM OUR SERVICES. 1. This will appear from the ancient Jews, who drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. 2. That prayer must be distinguished by right dispositions of the mind, is evident from the very design of prayer. Consider its parts—Adoration; thanksgiving; confession; intercession. The whole of this duty is designed to promote piety, by working certain holy dispositions in our hearts, by the help and blessing of God. Will not these remarks account for the barrenness of mere professors? Christians, stir up the gift of God that is within you. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *Universal forgetfulness of God* was the consequence of self-incurred abandonment by God. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The duty of taking hold of God:*—I. IT IMPLIES TO TAKE HOLD OF GOD IN THE EXERCISE OF SAVING FAITH. Expressions almost the same occur in this sense in two other parts of Isaiah (chaps. xxvii. 5, lvi. 6). To take hold of God, to take hold of His strength, to take hold of His covenant, to join ourselves to Him, all imply the one act of a sinner taking hold of Christ, or of God in Christ in the exercise of saving faith. But this first and essential exercise of saving faith is not what is principally referred to in our text. There is, then—II. A further exercise implied in taking hold of God, one which true believers alone can engage in, and one in which they may be very deficient. This exercise is alluded to by the apostle Paul, in Phil. iii. 12, where he says of himself, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;

but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The Greek word translated "apprehend," corresponds with the Hebrew word in our text translated "take hold of." Therefore, we infer, that the second exercise implied in taking hold of God, is TO APPREHEND HIS MORAL IMAGE. Those who are engaged in this exercise are blessings to the world and to the Church, and are objects of complacency to God. III. The third great exercise implied in taking hold of God is WRESTLING, IMPORTUNATE, PLEADING PRAYER. It is not every kind even of acceptable prayer that deserves the name of taking hold of God. Five ways may be mentioned in which a soul, through pleading prayer, taketh hold of God. 1. By taking hold of or pleading His perfections. God can do nothing contrary to His perfections. All His actings are the immediate result of them. But it pleaseth Him that His saints should plead His perfections, and, as it were, take hold of them in holy, humble, fervent importunity. 2. By pleading His relations to His people as Father, Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. 3. By pleading His promises, declarations and engagements. 4. By pleading His past dealings. Thou hast begun a good work in my soul; carry it on. Thou hast delivered Thy Church and people of old; do it now. Thou hast shamed and confounded Thine enemies, when their pride and their might were at the highest; shame and confound them now. Thou hast planted a vine in our land; look down from heaven; revive and quicken this Thy vine. 5. By acquiescing in the sovereignty, and looking to the unsearchable mercies of God. Conclusion: How lofty an exercise of soul it is to take hold of God. How marvellous the thought, a worm of the dust to influence the thoughts and operations of the Almighty God! It is a work too mighty for the feeble powers of man. No creature ever did or could accomplish it, except so far as strengthened by the Spirit. (*W. Mackenzie.*) *Lethargy in prayer:*—I. WE HAVE A STRIKING DEFINITION OF TRUE PRAYER. It is a taking hold of God, in no material sense, but by a spiritual apprehension so real and vivid that we seem to touch the Angel of the Covenant and say, with realizing perception of His Presence: "We will not let Thee go, except Thou bless us." This definition greatly helps us— 1. When, for instance, men insist that prayer is only acceptable as it arises from special fanes, we can reply that the hand of faith may feel after, find, and grasp the hand of God in the press of the busy street, the woodland glade, and the sequestered chamber. Since God is everywhere we may take hold of Him anywhere. 2. Again, when men tell us that prayers must be uttered in words of solemn grandeur and rhythm, we may remind them that prayer is a taking hold of God, and that it may exist in its intensest, truest form when not a word is uttered. 3. When, again, men suggest that priestly intervention is necessary to present our supplications, let us find refuge in this definition; for surely God will as much allow Himself to be grasped by the ungloved hand of the labourer, as by the dimpled hand of the little child. We need none to instruct us how to take hold; and each can best take hold for his own preservation. The intervention of a third person is indeed a source of weakness when it comes between us and the gracious Hand which reaches down to draw us out of many and deep waters. II. THE GRIEVOUS COMPLAINT. "There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." Why this fatal lethargy? 1. In the case of some, it no doubt arises from the stupefying effect of worldliness and self-indulgence. If the unwary traveller sits down to rest in the forest or the cave, where gases lie heavily on the ground, they may so invade his sense and benumb his mind that he will be presently unable to arouse himself to further exertion. This is the state of the opium-eater and the drunkard, of all who, like Tennyson's Lotus-eaters, come under the fatal spell of the narcotic. And is there not a mephitic poison issuing always from worldly amusements and society? 2. In the case of others, lethargy in prayer arises from a mistaken idea of the privilege of the child of God. They say that God is so wise and good, that it is a mistake and a sin to seek to impose our will on Him; that it is enough to take what He sends, and to bear what He imposes, without attempting to interfere by the urging of our desires. But there is nothing of this in the teachings of our Saviour. He perpetually says, Ask, seek, knock. He evidently would have us regard prayer as a means of obtaining blessings which otherwise we would altogether miss. 3. Others yield to this lethargy because they have intellectual difficulties in respect to prayer. They point to the majestic reign of law, the unbroken chain of cause and effect, the unalterable plan of the Divine procedure. How can God rule the world and yet answer prayer? They forget that prayer is probably as much a law of the universe as any other law, and that it is the method of God to carry out His particular purposes by the skilful handling of law; so that the laws of the upper

realm (and prayer is one of these) may be used to cancel and overcome those of the lower. Besides, is it not enough that Jesus prayed, and so unmistakably taught His disciples to do the same? 4. Yet others, again, do not stir themselves up to pray, because they say that they have prayed so long in vain. Prayer, they say, is so irregular and uncertain. There is no counting on it. Why, then, they argue, should they waste time and energy on that which is as likely to disappoint as to help them? This latter difficulty is possibly the most common of all, and does more than any other to relax men's energy in prayer. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to insist that prayer has a law as constant and unchangeable as gravitation, and if we do not succeed, it is because we are ourselves to blame. Nay, more, if we seldom obtain answers to our prayers, we must examine carefully into the cause; because, almost certainly, there is some flaw or fault in our own character, by reason of which our prayers are as missives lost in the post, or ships that have gone down at sea. III. THE LAMENT OVER THIS LETHARGY IN PRAYER. 1. It is very dangerous. The first step in spiritual declension is almost invariably in the closet. The whole stress of Satanic temptation is to induce us to relax our prayerfulness; and perhaps there is no time when we need to pray more than when this fatal disinclination begins to creep over us. 2. It is very sinful. Is it not wrong to reject the advances of our God, and refuse to comply with His commands to pray? This surely is a dishonour, a slight, a crime. 3. It is very strange. It must be the wonder of the angels, as they look on our tired and perplexed faces, amid our complicated cares, that we are so slack in our approaches to the strongest, wisest, gentlest Being in the universe, and are so reluctant to stir ourselves up to take hold of God. (*Life of Faith.*) *Self-influence*:—I. CERTAIN TRUTHS WHICH THIS LAMENTATION IMPLIES. 1. That God was ready to receive them graciously. 2. That man is prone to be slow of heart to seek unto God. 3. That man may oppose that slowness of heart—may stir himself up to take hold on God. Such was the view of Joshua when he said, "Incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel" (Josh. xxiv. 23). This truth was regarded by the Lord Himself when He proclaimed, "Incline your ear," etc. (chap. lv. 3). With a view to this, man may stir up—(1) The memory. (2) The imagination. (3) The reason. (4) The will. II. THE LAMENTATION ITSELF. Of it we may emphatically say (Ezekiel xix. 14), "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation." Why? 1. On account of present loss. They "forsake their own mercies," wrong their own selves as to present good. 2. On account of the uncertainty of life on earth. 3. On account of the force of habit (Jer. xiii. 23). Through the force of habit conscience may become so seared and the heart so hardened that the likelihood may rapidly lessen of the deteriorated mind ever stirring itself up to take hold on God. Let not the peculiarly encouraging character of the kind call be overlooked—"Let him take hold of My strength." (*J. Elliot.*) *No man to pray* (with chap. lxii. 1):—The general condition of the nation was deplorable enough (ver. 6). But there was one vein of sadness lying deeper than the sadness which filled the prophet's heart because of the condition of the people generally; he knew not of any man who was wounded and oppressed and driven to prayer as his only refuge, and as the people's only hope, by this grievous state of things. One man may be a Church's, a city's, a nation's saviour. Indifference to all interests but our own is a powerful narcotic which may put a Church or a nation to sleep. Perfect is the picture of this luxurious, cynical indifference drawn by the prophet Amos (chap. vi. 1–6). This very indifference to things not directly our own, to things not reckoned our own according to conventional standards, is again and again spoken of in Scripture as a cause of great astonishment to God; as if there was something too selfish, too cruel, too unbrotherly in it to be believed; as if men could not be so careless of what was good and right. "The Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment, and He saw there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." He says, "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold." He says again, "The people of the land have used oppression," etc. (Ezek. xxii. 29, 30). And here it should be distinctly observed that the taking an interest in things beyond the narrow limits of our own personal affairs is an interest full of tender concern, of self-abnegation, of brotherly love. Many a harsh man can look over his own boundary walls to grumble and find fault; but it was not the want of that of which Isaiah complained. Many can sit in judgment and condemn; but it was not judgment of that kind that he wanted. He did not want any one bitterly to point out the Church's faults, heartlessly to mock at her nakedness and poverty, self-righteously to cry shame upon her sins—he wanted a man to pray for her. When there was no man who could or

would shake off his selfish indolence to pray for the Church, the prophet himself said, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace," etc. Then, as if he were confident of success, and saw the fruits of his prayers, and tears, and toils, he says, "And the Gentiles shall see Thy righteousness, and all kings Thy glory," etc. (chap. lxii. 2–4). How different this attitude towards the Church to the cold selfishness which stands aloof altogether, or comes from its seclusion only to complain, and, by disturbance, to make bad worse! How different from the worldliness which is content for the Church also to be worldly; for her glory to be hidden by carnal pleasures and carnal things! How different from the mere denominational fervour—the fervour for church or chapel, which is satisfied with outside show and with prosperity that can be measured, and cares little or nothing for the growth of faith, hope and love, for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and for the salvation of souls! For Isaiah is bent upon seeing a Church whose righteousness should go forth as brightness, whose salvation should go forth as a burning lamp; on whose glory the Gentiles and kings should look; which should be named by a new name by the mouth of the Lord Himself, a name indicating the delightful change that has passed over her, and the new relation in which she stands to God and man. And surely it is worth any Christian's while to take up any good cause in this sympathetic way; to identify himself with it; to become responsible for it before God and man and his own conscience. To do so is to follow the example of all the noblest and holiest of our race, it is to follow the example of "Him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich," identifying Himself in the most absolute manner with our nature and our condition, until He redeemed us from all our sins, and raised us to sit at His right hand in His kingdom. (*J. P. Gledstone.*) *Taking hold upon God*:—The prophet reveals the very essence and soul of prayer. It is a stirring up of one's self to take hold of God. The very soul of devotion lies in realizing the Divine presence, in dealing with God as a real person, in firm confidence in His faithfulness,—in a word, in "taking hold of Him." Men do not take hold of a shadow, they cannot grasp the unsubstantial fabric of a dream. Taking hold implies something real which we grasp; and there is wanted to make prayer truthful and acceptable with God the grip and grasp of a tenacious faith, which believes the fact that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Taking hold implies a reverent familiarity with the Lord, by which we use a holy force to win a blessing from His hand. Laying hold upon God is not the act of a dead man, neither is it the deed of one who is destitute of spiritual perception; it is the act of one who is quickened and kept alive by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Men will do anything sooner than stir up themselves to take hold of God: they will build churches, and rear altars, and say masses and perform pilgrimages, and a thousand other things, but they do not want God, and will not have Him. It is great condescension on the Lord's part that He should permit it to be so, but so it is, and when He bares His right arm to smite you your safety lies in grasping that very hand which apparently is lifted for your destruction. I. The first form of taking hold, that which is intended in the text, is that in which THE AWAKENED SINNER TAKES HOLD UPON GOD. II. We very greatly need to have among us many THOROUGH BELIEVERS WHO TAKE HOLD UPON GOD BY FIDELITY TO HIM. I have seen applied to Calvin the motto, "He took fast hold." If ever a man did take fast hold on invisible things, it was that famous reformer. What he grasped he held with force of clear conviction, intelligent apprehension, and devout reverence. Such a man opens his Bible and resolves to find out what God's will is, and he judges for himself, for he knows that he will have to render a personal account. Such a man sets himself to extend the kingdom of Christ, impelled by inward zeal. Having obtained a solid fulcrum of assured knowledge, he now begins to use his lever and work upon others. He knows that he cannot be placed where God is not, and therefore he feels that his best Friend is always near. He is a man that calleth upon God, not merely in prayer, but by confessing His name, and owning His cause; and he stirs up himself to take hold upon God in the doing of all these things. III. We take a step further in advance when we mention a third form of this taking hold of God: We need a development in the form of THE WRESTLING PLEADER. The expression is borrowed from Jacob at the brook of Jabbok. A man who can take hold of God in prayer will be of the utmost value to the Church. IV. The fourth point is THE TAKING HOLD OF GOD BY THE STRENGTHENED BELIEVER: the man who has got beyond doubts and fears, and grasped the eternal verities. No question now as to whether there is a God or no: he knows Him, speaks with Him, walks with Him. He is quite sure about God's keeping His promises, he dares

not doubt that, for he has had too many proofs already of the faithfulness of God for him to distrust Him. Now, see how steadily that man moves about: trial does not bow him down, he expected it, and he expects to be delivered out of it. If you rush in upon him with the most terrible information it does not distress him, for "he is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Delivered unto iniquity:*—For "hast consumed," read "hast delivered us into the hand of our iniquities." Their sin has been allowed by God to breed deeper sin. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Melted into the hands of iniquity:*—We may suppose with Rosenmüller that the phrase strictly means, Thou dost melt us into the hand of our iniquities, *i. e.* subject us to them, make us unable to resist them, and passively submissive to their power. (*J. A. Alexander.*)

Ver. 8. **But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father.**—*God our King-Father:*—("Our Lord, Thou art our Father" with "the Lord is our King," chap. xxxiii. 22). That conviction of a living God, as distinguished from the lifeless one, which is all that many have, made up of a mere bundle of catechetical doctrines, will create a demand for many other convictions besides. For, mark what question presses, so soon as God has been revealed to the soul; it is the deeply self-interested one, In what relation, or relations, does this almighty and glorious One stand to the individual's self? The answer given by our two texts, and much of the Scripture besides, is, that He is related to each of us both as a Father and a King. Now, not only is there no contrariety betwixt the ideas of these two relations; but, properly, there is no sentiment in the one which the other does not contain in some degree. Nevertheless, the idea of a Father contains more prominently the sentiment of bountiful and tender cherishing; when that of a King contains more prominently that of regulation and control; and it is not till we have combined them that we can form an adequate conception of the relation in which He stands to us. (*W. Anderson, LL.D.*) *Our King-Father or Father-King the memorial of God:*—Some may say they are identical; nor would I deny, with much warmth, they are. But when the better mode of impressing the heart is the subject of inquiry, not a little depends, I am persuaded, on the order in which the two ideas of the complex relation are presented. 1. Even metaphysically He is first our Father and then our King: the idea of the Divine paternity is the principal one, and that of the royalty the subordinate and qualifying one: He begets us as children before He rules us as subjects. 2. But, whatever may be the state of the question metaphysically, there can be no doubt that, in respect of practical and salutary effect on the heart, the assigning of the place of primary consideration to the relation of Father has a decided advantage. When men ask you, Who is God? let your reply be, He is our Father. And when they say, Is He not your King also? let your reply again be, He is; but first our Father, and more our Father than anything else. Even a heathen could say, as an apostle has approvingly told us, "We are also His offspring." Although, in respect of our corporeal frames, we are in the predicament of the inferior animals; yet in respect of the nobler part of our constitutions—the immortal soul—in virtue of which, especially, we bear the Divine image, that has been communicated to us directly, by the breath of the Almighty (Eccles. xii. 7). 3. The thought is both solemnizing and animating; let us improve it to the ends of having our sense of responsibility deepened for filial reverence and obedience—for upholding the honour of God's family, by the purity, the elevation, and dignity of our characters—and, also, for our treatment of all mankind as being of a Divine parentage. 4. But it is especially in respect of confidence in His loving-kindness, that I call at present for improvement of the meditation. (*Ibid.*) *God the Father-King in redemption:*—1. Who is so ignorant as not to know that cold parental displeasure and warm parental affection are frequently found co-existent; and who cannot easily conceive the truth of the following case? I knew a father who, after having long remonstrated in vain with a profligate son—from abhorrence of the sight and hearing of his abominations and profanities, and from respect to his own and family's peace and honour, turned him out of his house, and would not acknowledge him when he met him on the street. All the time he wept and prayed for him in secret, and gave directions to a friend to take care that his wretched boy should never suffer from want. Is the paternity of the human father more tender and amiable than that of the Divine? Hear how He himself vindicates His parental character: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" etc. (Hosea xi. 8). 2. And yet hitherto I have not, properly, announced one syllable of the tidings of the Gospel. Nature and reason might have sufficed for conducting us all the length we have

gone. We need other guidance for proceeding further. I stopped short in my simple story about that young man. What became of him? Well, he repented; returned to his father's door, with humble confessions, and earnest promises of future well-doing; was taken in; and great was the joy that night throughout that dwelling. Now observe, that though the parallel does not terminate here, when tracing the analogy of the recovery of an outcast from the family of God, yet both lines receive the accession of new elements. On the part of God, there is the accession of the element of His royal character: and on the part of the sinner, the accession of the element of faith in a Mediator. The explanation is most important: it contains the secret of our salvation. Mark, therefore, that God does not re-admit the prodigal to His family, as an earthly father does, merely on account of his repentance; because, beside being a Father, He is a King. Consider, then, how this additional relationship of royalty is produced, and how it affects the Divine procedure. An earthly father's administration of his family is a matter of privacy. Public interests are not concerned in it; and he may do with his own what pleases his humour. He may open his door and re-admit the prodigal, even without any repentance or confession, if he choose. But God's family being the Public—the universal Public of created, moral intelligence; though this does not affect the personal love of the administrator, yet does it materially affect the mode of the administration. The family of children has enlarged into a kingdom of subjects; and though it be a Father's heart, it must be a King's policy by which the administration is conducted. David's parental heart said, Spare the young man Absalom; his royal policy commissioned the army to fight him down as a rebel. 3. What, then, is the state of our parallel now? It was sufficient for the re-admission of the prodigal into the earthly father's house that he should be penitent. But the order of all good government of a kingdom is, that the violation of the laws shall be visited with penal suffering, before there be a restoration to the privileges of citizenship. Behold the mystery of our redemption! And see the advantage of our having assumed the paternity of God as His primary and most characteristic relationship. It is this paternity which, humanly speaking, goes in quest of means for saving us; and returns, exclaiming in triumph, "Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." When we commence with the royal relationship, and make that the primary characteristic, there is danger that God may appear as being but coldly passive in the work of our salvation. But when we commence with the paternity of God, we more easily discover Him warmly active in the work of our salvation; with all a Father's self-interested love devising and executing its scheme. Having found the means of ransom in the substitutionary death of His Son incarnated, He brings it to us, that we may carry it away for presentation at the tribunal of His government. 4. This representation will explain, as clearly as any other, the nature, the necessity, and the efficacy of faith. As being that principle which gives credit to the Divine testimony, it lays hold of the sacrifice which God's paternal mercy has provided, and pleads with His royal justice that it be accepted as compensation for our transgressions. Mark the necessity of such faith. The gift which God has made of Christ to "sinners of mankind" universally is not the gift of pardon, but of the means of pardon, to be used to that end; and used by the sinner himself: for it would be unholy government to pardon a rebel, whatever might be the amplitude of satisfaction proffered on his behalf by another, if he himself despised or made light of the transaction. 5. Observe, now, a second time, the advantage of giving the paternal relation of God the first place in our meditation on His character. In virtue of this, the proclamation of the Gospel is not so much the proclamation of a King, declaring that no man shall be saved except through faith in that sacrifice; as it is the earnest entreaty of a Father that His children should believe, so as to be saved; when His paternal love shall enjoy them in their recovery to His home; yea, enjoy them. It is much for a child to enjoy his parent; but it is more for a parent to enjoy his child, as an object on which he may lavish his affection; and with all the yearnings of His paternity does God beseech the sinner to afford Him this Divine satisfaction. 6. Having explained the doctrine of God's paternal love, I now call for its correlative duty, filial confidence on the part of His children. 7. When this first principle of parental honour, confidence in God, is secured, the honouring of Him, which consists in obedience, follows naturally and necessarily. (*Ibid.*) **We are the clay and Thou our Potter.**—*Clay and Potter:*—The nearest parallel to this application of the common image of clay and potter is, perhaps, Job x. 9. It is the plea of the creature against seeming unreasonableness on the part of the Creator. Can the Potter allow the work on which He has

lavished His utmost skill and care to be broken in pieces? (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Lessons from a pottery*:—Many years ago it was my privilege to visit the porcelain works at Worcester, and there I learned most of what I know about the potter and his art. We were first taken into a large showroom, where there were displayed the finished products of the potter's skill and labour. Here we were glad to spend some time in looking upon the beauty and loveliness which the potter had created. In thinking upon what was exhibited there, what can be learned about the potter and his art with a view to understanding the work and grace of our heavenly Father as our Potter? There were two things that deeply impressed me. The first was the almost unlimited variety secured by the potter in his workmanship. There were not two pieces exactly alike. Everywhere you perceived the mind of the potter on the stretch, seeking to attain all possible variety of form, design and ornamentation. I said to myself: "Well, there is one thing very clear about the earthly potter—he has determined that in his work there shall be an utmost absence of repetition, monotony, similarity. By infinite variety he reveals his skill and the fruitfulness of his mind." If God is our Potter, are we to think of Him in this respect as like unto the earthly potter? Go to His work in Nature. How much of monotony is there in any department of God's creation? What does that mean for us? It means a very great deal for Christian life. As a young Christian, I had a way of greatly admiring other people. If I saw any person of decided and beautiful Christian character, my heart was impressed. But the mistake was that I also wanted to be like them! And if I saw any one doing a particular work for God I wanted to do something similar. This longing to be like other people became a great curse and hindrance. Then God had pity upon me, and showed me the mistake of it all, and said to me: "I do not want to make you like anybody else in the universe; I want to make you something different from everybody else;" and He graciously persuaded me to give myself up to Him, to let Him make me the one thing He wished to see me. No greater deliverance ever came into my life than that. Do not try to be like anybody. Do not be one of a set. It would be a thousand pities to go to heaven, and for the angels to say: "We have seen this sort before!" It will not be Christ's fault if that should happen in your case. There is something that God wants to make each one of us that shall reveal His glory in a way that nobody else does. The second thing to be noted about the work of the potter is this: His whole aim is to make of the clay, not a vessel for its own use, but a vessel for the joy and service of others. Let us realize that Christ is in our lives to turn them outward! When we had spent some time in the showroom, our guide bade us follow him. He at once led us through a door out into the works. What a change! We were now amid the noise and splash and dirt. First of all he directed our attention to a shelf, on which were some half-dozen lumps of what might be described as glass and chalk and clay. As a matter of fact, they were different kinds of clay. "All you have just seen inside there has been made out of such materials." Who had bridged the gulf between the shapeless clay and the beautiful vessel? The potter—that is what he is for. "We are the clay"—the thing of possibility only. The Lord is the Potter; and He can take the clay, and by His skill and power and grace, make it into a thing of joy and beauty for evermore. But our guide soon led us on, and we saw something of the processes of the potter's art. One of the first things he did with the clay was to put it into a mill, where it was ground for a week, ground until it was so fine that it would pass through silk with hundreds of meshes to the square inch. If the clay could have thought, how puzzled it would have been! It would have said: "There was something of me once, but I am coming to nothing now. I caught a glimpse through that open door of all those lovely vessels and vases, and I thought the potter was going to make me into one such as they; but here it is only grind! grind! grind! What does it all mean?" Experiences very much like that come to the soul that has surrendered itself to God. The methods and processes of the heavenly Potter are at times very perplexing, and in no discerned relation to the desired end. Be quite sure that God understands His own work! Trust Him. The next thing that struck me was the large use which the potter made of fire. I cannot tell you how many times the porcelain was put into the fire before it was finished. But there was this remarkable thing: it was never put into the fire unshielded. It was always enclosed in a strong outer vessel, closely sealed, so that the fire did its work, and yet no hurt came to the porcelain. Into the fire of trial and suffering God, our Potter, puts us all; but He never puts us in unshielded. When this white porcelain had been taken through a great many processes, it was put into the hands of skilful

artists, whose work it was to adorn it with the glory of colour and design with which we are all familiar. When the porcelain left the hands of the artist, the finger of a child could have brushed away all that he had painted upon it. But our guide explained that the porcelain would go into the fire, and that the fire would open its "pores," and take in the colouring, so that what the painter had put on it would become part of the very vessel itself. That illustrated to me this great truth, that we never become better people by merely knowing more. New truth in the mind is like the colouring upon the porcelain, and some failure of memory may remove it. But God's way is, when we have got a new truth, to lead us into some trial, some fire, that will make that truth part of our very manhood. Lastly, we were taken into another room, and there the artists were all busy working with a black fluid, which they were putting on the beautiful, pure, white porcelain. I said to our guide, "What are they doing here?" Apparently they were disfiguring the porcelain. His answer was: "They are putting on the gilt! When the porcelain goes into the fire, this black that you see upon it now will be transformed into gilt." There are times when God seems to be disfiguring the lives of his people. What is He doing? Putting on the gilt. (*G. C. Moore.*)

Ver. 9. **Be not wroth very sore, O Lord.**—*God's wrath deprecated:*—I. THE EVIL DEPRECATED. God's anger. 1. Merited. 2. Acknowledged. II. THE TERMS IN WHICH IT IS DEPRECATED. 1. Imply the justice of God's procedure. 2. Beseech a limitation of its severity. III. THE PLEA BY WHICH IT IS DEPRECATED. 1. Humble. 2. Confident. 3. Founded on God's covenant relation to His people. (*Homiletic Commentary.*)

Ver. 11. **Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire.**—*The burnt temple:*—I. HERE IS PATHETIC LAMENTATION. 1. The children of Israel regarded the temple as their own house. They spoke of it as God's house. But because it was God's it was their own, for they were God's; and all that particularly belonged to Him had a special interest for them, and they had a special claim in it. 2. This temple was sacred in the people's eyes. The prophet calls it, "our holy house." It was really so. 3. The Jews, exiled abroad, thought of yonder ruined house where their fathers praised the Lord. There is no attachment stronger than that which exists between men and women, sons and daughters of Christian fathers and mothers, who are worshipping in the place where their predecessors worshipped. 4. All their pleasant things were laid waste. II. HERE IS AFFECTIONATE EXPOSTULATION. "Wilt Thou refrain Thyself?" etc. The plain English of it is, "Canst Thou bear to see this, Lord? Does it not affect Thee as it does us? Hast Thou no sighs, no groans, no tears? And if Thou hast, wilt Thou not pluck Thy hand from out Thy bosom and help us? Wilt Thou not open Thy lips and speak a word of peace? We cannot bear Thy silence, Lord. Wilt Thou hold Thy peace, and afflict us very sore?" (*T. Spurgeon.*) **All our pleasant things are laid waste.**—*Religious things, pleasant things:*—The ordinances of religion are, to the Israel of God, "pleasant things." I. WHAT ARE THEY? 1. In the number of their pleasant things, they include the sanctuary. To them the temple is not a prison, a place of confinement and correction; but the house of their heavenly Father, their "holy and beautiful house;" beautiful because holy. 2. In the number of their "pleasant things" they include Sabbaths. To many, indeed, God's holy day is uninviting, and even irksome. But the Christian "calls the Sabbath a delight, and considers the holy of the Lord honourable." To him it is a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; a weekly jubilee: and, wearied with the toils, and follies, and vexations of the world, he hails a day of seclusion from it. 3. Are not the Scriptures some of their "pleasant things"? 4. This, too, will apply to the preaching of the Word. 5. They find it a pleasant thing to approach God in prayer, and to "come before His presence with singing"—a pleasant thing to surround His table, and to refresh their minds with the memorials of a Saviour's dying love—to be in the circle of pious friends, and hear from their lips "what God has done for their souls." II. HOW THEY BECOME SO POWERFULLY ATTRACTIVE. For it is certain they are not so universally: by numbers they are not only neglected, but despised. Whence, then, do real Christians find them so pleasing? 1. There is in them a suitableness to their dispositions. Thus we know music charms those who have an ear for it. Money is a pleasant thing to the covetous; honour to the ambitious; scandal to the slanderous. In all these instances there is something that meets the taste; and that which gratifies always delights. So it is here. The

pleasure of the Christian does not depend upon persuasion—but inclination. 2. Experience is another source of this pleasure. 3. Continual need also renders them pleasant things. III. REVIEW WHAT WE HAVE SAID—and learn—1. To justify religion from the reproaches of the world. The world pretends that the services which religion demands of us are all slavery and gloom. But if you are willing to enter in, "let no man's heart fail him." 2. Let us try ourselves by this rule. A man may want assurance and still be in a state of safety: but if he be habitually a stranger to pleasure in Divine things, and can pass through all the services of religion as a mere formalist, it is an awful proof that "he has no part nor lot in the matter; his heart is not right in the sight of God." A number of speculative opinions, cold ceremonies, cheap moralities, in which the affections have no share, can never be a substitute for real devotion. 3. What an affliction do Christians sustain when they are deprived of their "pleasant things"! This may be done in two ways. (1) By the removal of these privileges from them. Thus persecution has sometimes forbidden them to assemble together, and has silenced their preachers, destroyed their sanctuaries, and banished all religious ordinances from a neighbourhood. God sometimes inflicts His judgments upon a place for neglect and abuse of Gospel privileges. (2) By removing Christians from these privileges. Thus business may call them away from a favoured situation, accidents or sickness may detain them prisoners from the courts of the Lord. 4. Let us be very thankful that these "pleasant things" are within our reach—that we have been so long favoured with them—that we have them in so rich an abundance—that we have liberty to partake of them—and strength to go forth and enjoy them. 5. Let us raise our thoughts and desires after the "pleasant things" of heaven. Philip Henry often said, when he had finished the delightful exercises of the Sabbath, "Well, if this be not the way to heaven, I know not what is." These are introductory to the glory that shall be revealed: they are foretastes to endear it, and earnests to insure it. (*W. Jay.*)

Ver. 12. **Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O Lord?**—*Self-restraint and silence, as applied to God,* are common figures for inaction and apparent indifference to the interests, and especially the sufferings, of His people. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Jehovah's mercy* cannot violently restrain itself longer; it must burst forth, like Joseph's tears in the recognition scene (Gen. xlv. 1). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

CHAPTER LXV.

VER. 1. **I am sought of them that asked not for Me.**—*Jehovah's answer to the prayer of the Church:*—The supplication is ended; and chap. lxv. appears to be intended as the answer—an answer, however, in which a distinction is drawn between worthy and unworthy members of Israel, and a different prospect is held out to each. God has ever, He says, been accessible to His people, He has ever been ready to renew intercourse with them: it was they who would not respond, but provoked Him with their idolatries. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *A nation that was not called by My name:*—"A nation that called not on My name." The reference is to those among the people who, after the Restoration, still practised the idolatries of their pre-exilic forefathers. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *The very bold prophecy:*—We learn on inspired authority that this is a very bold passage (Rom. x. 20); it required much courage to utter it at the first, and in Paul's day it needed still more to quote it and press it home upon the Jews around him. He who protests against a self-righteous people, and angers them by showing that others whom they despised are saved while they themselves are being lost, will have need of a dauntless spirit. This text has the clear ring of free grace about it; and for this reason it may be called bold. I. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF HIS GRACE. This is remarkably prominent in the work before us. 1. The personality of God comes forth in that He Himself is observant of all that is done. Do any seek him? He saith, "I am sought." Do any find him? He saith, "I am found." Is there any preaching of the Gospel? The Lord declares, "Behold Me, behold Me." 2. He Himself is the great object of desire where grace is in operation. When men are savingly aroused, they seek—what? Religion? By no means. They seek God, if

they seek aright. The Lord saith, "I am found." If men do not find God they have found nothing. God Himself fills the vision of faith; observe the words, "Behold Me, behold Me." We look to God in Christ, and find all that our soul needs. 3. He Himself is the Speaker of that call by which men are saved. Here are the words: "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." The Lord Himself speaks the effectual word. 4. He Himself is the director of the message. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name." Not only does God speak the Gospel, but He speaks it home to those whom He appoints to hear it. This surrounds the Gospel with a strange solemnity: if the Gospel blesses us, it is not it, but God that blesses: God Himself has come unto us. This fact has another aspect to it; for if the Gospel be rejected, it is God that is rejected. Read the next verse: "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." II. THE DELIGHT WHICH GOD TAKES IN THE WORK OF GRACE. God is glad to be sought and found by those who once were negligent of Him. 1. It is evident that He rejoices in contrast to the complaint of the next verse. 2. The Lord rejoices in each step of the process. There is a poor soul beginning to cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" and lo, the Lord says, "I am sought." A man has only just begun to attend the House of Prayer; he has only lately commenced the earnest study of the Bible; the Lord sees it, and He says, "I am sought." As when a fisherman smiles because a fish has begun to nibble at the bait, so the Lord notes the first movings of the heart towards Himself, and He says, "I am sought." The very next sentence is, "I am found." 3. The Lord also rejoices in the persons who seek Him. He says, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me." He will be glad for any heart to keep on seeking that has begun to seek; but He is best pleased when non-seekers become seekers. 4. The Lord rejoices in the numbers who seek and find Him. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation." When shall the day come that nations shall be born at once? III. THE DESCRIPTION WHICH GOD HIMSELF GIVES OF THE WORK OF GRACE. 1. The Lord tells us where He finds the objects of His grace. He says, "They asked not for Me; they sought Me not; they were not called by My name." What a mercy it is that He comes to us in our sin and misery; for assuredly we should not else come to Him. 2. He next describes that Gospel which comes to them as the power of God. Here are His own words: "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." The way of salvation is, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." 3. Then the Lord goes on to mention the converts which the Gospel makes. The careless become seekers, the ungodly finders, the prayerless behold their God and live. 4. The Lord also describes the experience of the saved. God comes to us that we may come to Him. IV. THE USE WHICH GOD MAKES OF ALL THIS. The Lord here took care that when He said, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me," His words should be written down, and that they should be made known to us. It is not everything that God may say to Himself that He will afterwards repeat to us; but here these private utterances of the Divine heart are spoken out to us by Isaiah, and left on record in this inspired Book. To what end do you think it is so? 1. That he may excite in us wonder and admiration. 2. To destroy pride and self-esteem. 3. To encourage you who are seeking Him: for if those who do *not* seek Him often find Him, why, you that do seek Him are sure to find Him. 4. To encourage workers. Go to work among the worst of the worst; for since God is found of those who seek Him not, there is hope for the vilest. 5. That he may convict those who do not come to Him of the greatness of their sin. Look, saith He, those who never heard of Me before have found salvation, while you who have been instructed, and invited, and impressed, have still held out and resisted My Spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 3–5. **A people that provoked Me to anger.**—*Obstinacy provokes God's wrath:*—By rejecting His love with stiff-necked obstinacy, they have incurred wrath, which, though long and patiently restrained, now bursts out with uncontrolled violence. "The people that continually provokes Me to My face, sacrificing in the gardens, and burning incense on the tiles, who sit in vaults and pass the night in retired places, who eat flesh of swine, and broken pieces of abominable things are in their dishes, who say: Halt! Come not too near me! For I am holy to thee,—these are a smoke in My nose, a fire blazing continually." (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Illegal and superstitious cults:*—The reference to "bricks" remains unexplained; sitting in the graves was for the purpose of obtaining oracles or dreams from the dead—the so-called "incubation." (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) "*Broth of abominable things*":—Such creatures as are enumerated in chap. lxvi. 17. The "sacrifices are

boiled and yield a magical hell-broth" (W. Robertson Smith). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. Which say, Stand by thyself.—"*I am holier than thou*":—For "I am holier" read, probably, "else I will make thee holy." The practices referred to were "mysteries," and the initiated would communicate his "holiness" to others by contact with them, and so unfit them for all the ordinary uses of life (cp. Ezek. xliv. 19). (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) Ver. 5 alludes to those who claimed superior sanctity in virtue of certain rites into which they had been initiated. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *Self-righteousness,—a smouldering heap of rubbish*:—The application of the passage to Israel is just thus. Year after year God dealt with great patience towards His chosen people, but they seemed to be desperately set upon idolatry in one form or another. Sometimes they worshipped Jehovah, but then they did it under figure and symbol, whereas He has expressly forbidden that even His own worship should be thus celebrated. At other times they altogether rejected Jehovah, and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth, and whole troops of the gods of the heathen, and thus they provoked the Lord exceedingly. They also practised necromancy, or pretended communion with the dead, and witchcraft and sorcery, and all manner of abominable rites, like the depraved nations around them. When this open rebellion was given up, as it was after the captivity—for the Jews have never been guilty of idolatry since that day—they fell into another form of the same evil, namely, self-righteousness: so that when our Lord came He found self-righteousness to be the crying sin of Israel, the Pharisees carrying it to such a pitch as to render it utterly ridiculous. They reckoned that the touch of a common person polluted their sacredness, so that they needed to wash after walking down a street. When they traversed the ways they took the edge of the pavement, so that they might not brush against the garments of the passers-by, and even in the temple in prayer they stood by themselves lest they should be defiled. Their whole spirit is expressed in the words of the text—"Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." This God declares to be as obnoxious to Him as smoke in a man's nose. Self-righteousness is rampant in our own day. I. THE SIN OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS GROWS UP AMONG RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. It is not always the sin of the outside world, for many outsiders do not pretend to any righteousness at all, and I fancy they think all the better of themselves for that. This is an idle plea which it needs not many words to expose. "I make no profession," says one. This is about as honourable a confession as if a thief should boast when caught at picking pockets, "I do not make any pretence to be honest," or a liar when detected should turn round and cry, "I never professed to speak the truth." Among those who profess to be religious, self-righteousness very frequently comes in, because they have not truly received the religion of Jesus Christ; if they were true believers they would be humble and contrite, for self-righteousness and faith in Christ are diametrically opposed. Many who mingle with Christians, and are religious in a certain sense because they practise the forms of religion, are wont to put the form into the place of the spirit. These persons, too, even when they do not join the Christian Church, but only worship or seem to worship with Christians, are very apt to think that they must be better than other people because they do so. It is the danger of outwardly religious people, who are not savingly converted, to dream that they are somewhat advantaged by a mere attendance on the means of grace. Should an Egyptian rub his shoulders against an Israelite, would it turn him into an Israelite? Will living near a rich man make you rich? Do you forget that cry of our Lord, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin. Woe unto thee, Bethsaida"? II. THIS IS A SIN WHICH FLOURISHES WHERE OTHER SINS ABOUND. We read of these people that they did evil before the eyes of God, and chose that wherein He delighted not. They blasphemed God, and polluted themselves with unhallowed rites, communing with demons and the powers of darkness, and pretending to speak with departed spirits; and yet for all that they said—"Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." Self-righteousness is never more ridiculous than in persons whose conduct would not bear scrutiny for a moment. Self-righteous men, like foxes, have many tricks and schemes. They condemn in other people what they consider to be very excusable in themselves. These people will make a righteousness this way—they plead that if they do wrong yet there are some points in which they are splendid fellows. Some one thing in which the unconverted man may excel is put in to make up for his deficiencies in a hundred other ways. By hook or by crook a man will make out that he is not so bad as he seems to be; the inventiveness of self-esteem is prodigious. No heap of rubbish is

too rotten for the accursed toadstool of proud self to grow upon. III. IT IS IN ITSELF A GREAT SIN. One is almost startled to find self-esteem placed after such a list of sins as this chapter records. To the Jew the eating of swine's flesh and broth of abominable things was a great pollution, but self-righteousness is classed with it; it is even placed with necromancy and witchcraft. Drunkenness and swearing are sin in rags, but self-righteousness is sin in a respectable black coat. It is an aristocratic sin, and does not like to be put down with the common ruck; and if we call it sin, yet many will plead that it is only so in a very refined sense. But God does not think so; He classes it with the very worst, and He does so because it is one of the worst. For a man to be self-righteous is in itself a sin of sins. For, first, it is blasphemy. God is holy. Here comes this base impostor and boasts, "And I am holy too." Is not that a ludicrous and contemptible form of blasphemy? It is profanity in its very essence. More, this self-righteousness is idolatry, for the man who counts himself to be righteous by his own works worships himself. Practically, the object of his adoration is his own dear, delectable, excellent self. Then, again, it is profanity, for it gives God the distinct lie. The Lord declares that no man is righteous. IV. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE FRUIT OF MAN'S OWN THOUGHTS. Look at ver. 2. Those who have high thoughts of themselves do not walk according to God's commandments, but according to their own notions. If any man thinketh himself to be righteous in himself, he has never derived that idea from God's law, and certainly not from the Gospel, for the Gospel knows no man after the flesh as righteous, but it regards all men as sinners, and comes to them with pardon; it treats men as lost and comes to save them. Self-righteous people are not much inclined to search the Scriptures, they do not read them with an understanding heart, so as to get the meaning; they rather make the Bible say their own meaning, and twist it to support their own pleasing dream. V. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS THIS VICE ABOUT IT, THAT IT ALWAYS LEADS TO DESPISING OTHERS. That is the pith of the text. VI. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS MOST ABOMINABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. What does He compare it to? He says, "It is a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day." At the bottom of the garden we gather together the dead leaves, and all the rubbish of the garden, and the heap is lighted, and it keeps on burning and smouldering all the day; and if you go and stand in the eye of the wind your eyes will smart, your nose will be offended, and you will feel that you cannot bear it. We do not wonder that He thus scorns and abhors proud self-righteousness, for God is a God of truth, and truth cannot bear a lie, and self-righteousness is a mass of lies. Moreover, self-righteousness is such a proud thing. God is always provoked with pride. Self-righteousness also denies the wisdom of God's plan, and is utterly opposed to it. God's present plan of working in the world goes upon the theory that we are guilty; being guilty, He provides a Saviour for us, and sends us a Gospel full of grace. VII. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS MOST EFFECTUALLY BARS A MAN FROM ALL HOPE OF SALVATION. We cannot be saved unless we become truly holy, but no man ever becomes truly holy who is content with a false holiness. Self-righteousness prevents repentance. You will never believe in Jesus Christ while you believe in yourself. What is the remedy for all this? God saith, "Behold Me"; that is to say, He bids thee cease from doting upon thine own fancied beauties and worshipping thine own foolish image. Look first to the holy God and tremble. Canst thou, of thyself, ever be like Him, pure, spotless, glorious? Look to Him and despair. Then comes the second, "Behold Me." See Jesus Christ on the cross dying, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. As thou seest Him dying thy self-righteousness will die. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *False grounds of superiority in holiness:*—The disposition to arrogate the dignity of religious worth and excellence has never become extinct among men, nor the quite consistent disposition to turn it to the use of pride. 1. In some instances, an assumption of superior holiness has been made upon the ground of belonging to a certain division or class of mankind; a class having its distinction in the circumstance of descent and nativity, or in some artificial constitution of society. Thus the ancient Jews,—in virtue merely of being Jews. Imagine the worst Jew comparing himself with Aristides, Phocion or Socrates. The Brahmins, in virtue of a pretended pre-eminently holy descent; an emanation from the head of their creating god. In popish countries, the numerous ecclesiastical class. Something of this even in protestant England. In these instances there has been an assumption of holiness independently of individual personal character. What an infamy to perverted human reason, that anything which might leave the individual evidently bad, in heart and life, could yet be taken as constituting him the reverse of bad, that is, holy! 2. In many periods and places men have reputed themselves

"holy" on the ground of a punctilious observance of religious forms and ceremonies whether of Divine appointment or human invention. This took the place of the true religious sanctity among the Jews. It is a grand characteristic of paganism. It actually stands instead of religion and morality among the far greater part of the people under the dominion of the Romish Church. It is to be feared there are some among us who venture a delusive assumption on the ground of a regular attention to the external services of religion. But we have cause to know that all this may be, and yet no vital transforming prevalence of religion in the heart. 3. Another ground of such assumption is general rectitude of practical conduct, separate from the true religious principle of moral excellence. 4. The pride of self-estimation for holiness is apt to be betrayed by persons who have preserved a character substantially free from reproach, against those who have, in some known instance, fallen into great sin. It might have been a case in which they were encountered by sudden, or complicated, or very extraordinary temptation, such as all should pray earnestly to be saved from. The delinquent may have penitently deplored the transgression through many subsequent years. But it has been often enough seen that another person, who has been happy enough not to incur any such marked blemish on his character, will assume a tone of high superiority against him, though he may never have had the same strength of temptation to combat with; may never think of ascribing his exemption to any higher cause than his own good principles; and may be quite destitute of some valuable qualities the other possesses. The whole life of this self-applauder may have been little better than a series of negatives. His faulty, penitent brother may have done much good. 5. A man may have had his mind directed to a speculative knowledge of religious doctrine; and we will suppose that it is valuable knowledge that he has gained. All this may be, and yet the man feel little or nothing of the sanctifying power of religious truth. Yet, so ready is the speculatist to take to himself all the dignity and excellence of his subject and his cause, that this man may take up a lofty pretension—if not strictly and formally to "holiness," yet to some meritorious relation to truth and religion; something which authorizes him in a high contempt,—not only of those who know nothing about religion, but also of those who feel its genuine influence and power, when they are feeble in the speculative intelligence of it. He accounts himself to be, as it were, in the confidence of religion, and that he must be invested with something of its venerable character, when he can so authentically declare its mind. 6. There is such a thing as a factitious zeal in the active service of religion; and that forms a ground of high pretension. Men in restless activity; full of scheme, and expedient, and experiment, and ostentatious enterprise. But an attentive observer could easily descry that the cause of God was a very secondary concern with them, even at the best interpretation. Their grand object (whether they were conscious of it or not) was their own notoriety; and the cause of religion happened to be that which would most effectually serve this purpose. 7. There are a number of persons among professing Christians whose minds are almost ever dwelling on certain high points of doctrine, sought chiefly in the book of God's eternal decrees. And it is on these doctrines that they found, in some manner, an absolute assurance of their being in the Divine favour. God forbid that we should deny or doubt that there is a firm and rational assurance of salvation attainable in this life. But such persons as we are referring to betray that their assurance, which takes its stand on so lofty a position, independent of a faithful estimate of the heart and life, has an unsanctifying effect; it slackens and narrows the force and compass of the jurisdiction of conscience; and, especially, cherishes in them the spirit of our text. 8. We may name as one of the things made a ground of pretension and pride, the experience of elated, ardent, enthusiastic feelings, in some semblance of connection with religion, but not really of its genuine inspiration. (*John Foster.*)

Ver. 8. **Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster.**—*God's regard for the faithful remnant of His people*:—As one does not destroy a cluster consisting of good and bad berries, because one would also destroy the Divine blessing contained in it, so Jehovah for His servants' sake will not annihilate Israel. He will not destroy all indiscriminately; the sense is not: the sap along with husk and shell (Knobel, Hahn), but: the berries having good sap along with the preponderant bad berries (J. H. Michaelis, Seinecke). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) It is an application to new circumstances of Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant (chap. vi. 13). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) **Destroy it not.**—"*Destroy it not*":—View the passage in reference to—I. GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE, THE JEWS. II. CITIES AND NATIONS

GENERALLY. III. THE STATE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. IV. PENITENT BACKSLIDERS. V. YOUNG INQUIRERS. VI. THOSE WHO ARE CALLED MOST UNPROMISING CHARACTERS. (*J. G. Pearsall.*) *Little things*:—Here we have four lessons taught us by a bunch of grapes. I. THAT GREAT GOOD MAY BE STORED IN LITTLE THINGS. A bunch of grapes is a little thing, and yet there is a blessing in it. With a heart given to Jesus, a child is a sun which cannot but shine, a fountain which cannot but send out streams, a flower which cannot but fill the air with sweetness. II. GOD ALONE PUTS THE BLESSING INTO LITTLE THINGS. In this He displays—1. His wisdom. 2. His omnipotence. 3. His condescension and compassion. III. LITTLE THINGS ARE TO BE SPARED FOR THIS BLESSING IN THEM. There are plenty of little things which you are apt to despise because they are little, and yet, destroy them not, says God, for a blessing is in them. 1. Your vows and resolutions. 2. Your principles. 3. Your habits. 4. Your character. 5. Your friendships. 6. Your interest in the heathen. IV. IF THE BLESSING IS LACKING IN THEM THEY WILL BE UNDONE FOR EVER. "Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." As if it were said, If there were no blessing in it, then it might be destroyed. It is the blessing which delivers. If there is no blessing in us, we are doomed. The unprofitable servant hid his talent in the napkin, but he could not hide himself from his master's indignation. (*J. Bolton.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **That prepare a table for that troop.**—*Luck and Fortune*:—Among Orientals the planets Jupiter and Venus were worshipped as the Larger and the Lesser Luck. They were worshipped as Merodach and Istar among the Babylonians. Merodach was worshipped for prosperity. It may be Merodach and Istar to whom are here given the names Gad (or Luck) and Meni, or Fate, Fortune. There was in the Babylonian Pantheon a "Manu the Great, who presided over fate." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The "lectisternia"*:—The rites described are the lectisternia, well known throughout the ancient world, in which a table was spread, furnished with meats and drinks as a meal for the gods. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *God or chance?*—Let us give the passage its true rendering, and it may convey to us a very solemn lesson. It is, "That as for you that forsake His service, that prepare a table for fortune, and pour out the wine for destiny, I have destined you for the slaughter. Behold, My servants shall eat; but ye who prepare a table for fortune shall be hungry. Behold, My servants shall drink; but ye who pour out libations to destiny shall be thirsty. Behold, My servants shall rejoice; but ye who believe in luck shall be ashamed. Ye shall leave your name for a curse. My servants shall bless themselves, and shall swear by the God of Amen—that is, the God of verity and of faithfulness." The apostate Jews were beginning to trust in the gods of the nations, to make banquets to the planet Jupiter, which they regarded as the star of fortune, and to pour libations to the planet Venus, which they regarded as the star of luck. Therefore God tells them that not these stars, not these idols, not these imaginary entities; but that He would be their destiny, and that He would deliver them, because fortune and destiny which they worshipped could guide them only to hunger and thirst, and ruin; but His servants, they who trusted in Him, should never be ashamed; they should find Him to be their God, a God of blessing, a God of amen—yea, a faithful witness. (*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*) *The temptation to ignore God*:—Have we no similar temptation? The passage is full of the deepest lessons. It touches upon the very first commandment—"Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." It emphasizes the very first chapter of Genesis—"It is God that hath made us, and not we ourselves." It is nothing short of a whole philosophy of history and a whole philosophy of life. The terms, "accident," "fortune," "luck," play a vast part in the customs and literature of the world, but no part at all in Scripture. The very word "chance," properly speaking, is entirely absent alike from the Old and New Testament. It is, I suppose, belief in chance that gives its terrible fascination to that pestilent folly of gambling which has ruined so many thousands of Englishmen. But let us look at this subject of the supposed government of life by chance from far wider points of view than these. 1. For instance, it very closely affects our human history. The ancient nations believed in chance. They called it "chance," or "fortune," if one man got a crown as the prize of his wickedness and the other got a gibbet; they called it "chance" if a battle lost, which raised one ruler from a dungeon to a throne, cut down another from the throne to a dungeon. In this way they, as the prophet says, raised a table to fortune. Do you look at the history of mankind in this way or not? What is history to you? Is it a mere ghastly phantasmagoria of human passions struggling together, or is it the unfolding

of a great Divine drama to a merciful issue? Neither in national life nor individual life can we pretend to understand the dealings of God. We cannot tell why the career of a great man is cut short just when he might seem to have been most able to save his country, and why the life of a villain is not cut short before he has done thousands into misery and ruin. We are like a deaf man watching the fingers of the harpist as they dance over the strings. 2. But now, turning from history in general to the individual lives of each of us, I can hardly exaggerate the difference which it will make to us whether we regard our lives as being guided by God or as being guided by accident. Nominally, I suppose, we all profess that it is God who is weaving the pattern of our little day; but do we truly believe it, and do we behave as if we did? Take, for instance, the events of which we habitually speak as the accidents of life. If we can think that these things happen simply by chance, what misery it may cause us! How do men and women thus painfully stricken sometimes curse the day of their life! But what a difference when they have the grace to recognize that this may be in their own life but bitter aloes from the gentle hand of God! As this thought, that it is God and not chance who "shapes our ends," touches even the most imperfect characters with the glory of resignation, how may it give to the whole course of our daily life the grace of contentment! (*Ibid.*) I wish to emphasize the prophet's warning against the counter sin of pouring out spiced wine for destiny—in other words, of regarding all life as though we were the helpless victims of blind necessity, of irreversible laws, of passionless and adamantine forces, which we can neither modify nor resist. The forms taken by this view of destiny are sometimes religious and sometimes irreligious. 1. One of them professes to be very religious indeed—it is Calvinism. 2. Another form of this worship of destiny is fatalism—the notion that as God has decreed everything in this life, nothing will happen except what He has decreed, and therefore that it is quite useless for men to stir. When, in the conquest of Mexico, the unhappy emperor, Montezuma, was crushed with blow after blow of disaster, he made use of this proverb, "We are born; let that come which must come." Fatalism, like Calvinism, is founded on misapprehended truths, and issues in deplorable results; and it, too, must be flung away as being, for all practical purposes, absurd and false. 3. But there is one more form of "preparing a table for fortune, and pouring out spiced wine for destiny." It is materialism, which denies the existence of God altogether, or treats Him, at the best, as an unproved hypothesis. It makes its God of science, of nature, of material laws, of man himself. It makes man a mere machine. It destroys at a touch all responsibility. It makes suicide a perfectly permissible resource. It says, to quote its own votaries, that nothing is worthy our efforts, our struggles, or our energies—that the world is a bankrupt in all quarters, and life a business which does not pay its expenses, and annihilation preferable to existence, and the world fundamentally something which ought not to exist. Well, as long as there is such a thing as Christianity, we must brand the insolent, aspiring brow of these spurious notions. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12–14. **Therefore will I number you to the sword.**—*The declaration of God against the disobedience of Israel:*—I. THE ACCUSATION. A guilty inattention to the voice of God. II. THE THREAT (vers. 13, 14). (*R. C. Buddicomb, M.A.*) *God's call despised:*—I. THE GRACIOUS CALL OF GOD. II. THE IMPENITENCE OF MANY. III. THE INEVITABLE RESULT. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*)

Vers. 13–14. **Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry.**—*The better feast:*—It is observable how frequently in Holy Scripture mankind are divided into two classes. In the text, the Lord God Himself clearly distinguishes between His servants and others. The one shall eat, drink, and rejoice; the other shall hunger, thirst, and be sorrowful. I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS. II. THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO DISOBEY HIM. (*W. Mudge.*) *Incentives to religious decision:*—I. FROM THE SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE BEYOND ALL THE BOASTED DISTINCTIONS OR PROFESSIONS OF WORLDLY AND UNGODLY MEN. 1. They have a better Master and portion. 2. They have better resources and supplies. 3. They have better enjoyments. 4. They have better prospects. II. FROM THE PECULIAR SOURCES OF DISSATISFACTION AND WRETCHEDNESS TO WHICH YOU ARE EXPOSED. (*S. Thodey.*)

Ver. 14. **Behold, My servants shall sing.**—*Joys:*—Heathenism knows nothing of the gladness described in our text. But in this life every man may sing for joy

of heart. 1. God makes His servants sing for joy of heart. There was once a famous musician who could bring out the most charming music from one string of a violin. Like that violin, many of us have only one string, and that a cracked one; but our God can make it sound forth perfect praise. 2. You may recognize a servant of God by his joyous face. We do not see many joyous faces, except in little children; and only then at odd times. The human race is born to trouble; but God can turn our sorrow into joy. How pleasant to look on a glad and joyous face! Nightingales do not often come so far north as Manchester; but last year one of those birds built its nest outside our city, and dozens of people went out to hear the sweet singer of the night. Letters were written to the newspapers about it, and everybody thought it a remarkable thing. How sweet it was to hear the warble of that bird in the darkness of the night! If the nightingale sang in the day-time, we might not notice it any more than the melody of the lark or the music of the wren; it is delightsome to us because it is a song in the night. Likewise, a joyous face and joyous words are equally remarkable. In this world of dark doubts and fears, let the singing of the joy in your heart be seen in your face and heard in your words. 3. The servants of God are also known by their joyous disposition. Live temperately, be home in good time every evening, rise early; and the joyousness of life shall enter your heart. 4. The servants of God have the joy of knowing Him. 5. There is the joy of pardon. 6. There is the joy of salvation. 7. We have also the joy of faith. How blessed to be able to trust God's care! In the long roads of the East, where people have to travel wearily on foot for many miles, it is the custom of kindly-hearted people to put on the road-side a pitcher of water, so that the thirsty traveller may freely drink. Likewise, God puts blessings and comforts for us on our pathway; and such tokens of His goodness cause us to sing for joy. 8. We have the joy of His presence. One day, when the Grecian army was near the enemy's camp, Alexander the Great slept very peacefully; and when he awoke, one of his friends said—"Alexander, how is it you slept so well?" The king replied, "Slept so well? Of course I can sleep well. Does not Parmenio watch?" Does not God watch over you? 9. There is the joy of His promises. Lord Chatham one day promised his son that when the garden wall was pulled down, he should be present to see it fall. But forgetting his promise, he gave orders for the wall to be taken down in the absence of his son. He remembered it the next day, and at once ordered it to be rebuilt, in order that the promise might be kept. But God never forgets His promise. 10. There is the joy of the future. You may ask, "Is there any joy in death?" Yes! One day, a sculptor was near death; pain shot through his frame; and when his wife's tears dropped on his face, he said, "My dear, have patience; this pain is only the chiselling!" So, when death comes to you, you shall have the joy of knowing that your pain is God's kindly hand dealing very gently with you. (*W. Birch.*)

Vers. 17–25. **For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.**—"*New heavens and a new earth,*" *i. e.* a new universe, Hebrew having no single word for the Cosmos. The phrase sums up a whole aspect of the prophetic theology. The idea of a transformation of nature so as to be in harmony with a renewed humanity has met us several times in the earlier part of the book (chaps. xi. 6–9, xxix. 17, xxx. 23 ff., xxxii. 15, xxxv., etc.), and is a frequent theme of prophecy, but the thought of a new creation is nowhere expressed so absolutely as here. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The state of the Church during the millennium.*—The heavens and the earth mean the New Testament Church. There are beauty and propriety in the figure employed; for, not to speak of the manner in which the state of the world is affected by the state of religion, the dependence of the Church upon spiritual and heavenly influences is as immediate as that which our earth has upon the surrounding atmosphere. When the sky is filled with dark clouds and pours forth incessant rains, or when it emits a continued and scorching heat, the fruits of the field are destroyed; but when it diffuses genial influences, and gives sunshine and rain, in just proportions, fertility and abundance are the results. In like manner the state of the Church depends upon the influences which God is pleased to communicate: should these be rich and gracious, the Church is prosperous and happy; but should these be scanty and afflictive, the interests of religion languish and decay. When, therefore, it is said that God will create new heavens and a new earth, we are to explain the words as referring to the beneficial change which is to be effected upon the state of the Church. This change will be so great, and so blissful, as to merit the name—a new creation. It will introduce so many blessings, and unfold so many

beauties, and diffuse such universal joy, that the former state of affliction, sorrow, and danger shall not be remembered nor come into mind. To what period in the history of the Church does this prediction (ver. 17) refer? Many of the early Christian writers regarded it as descriptive of the state of the Church in heaven, and supported their view by the words of Peter, that after the earth and atmosphere have been destroyed by fire, there will be formed new heavens and a new earth, in which the righteous shall dwell. But the verses assert that, in the time to which this prediction refers, there will be sin and death, and that men shall build houses and inhabit them; and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. Others, again, have viewed the predictions as pointing out the change which took place upon the Church and world, when the Jewish State was overthrown, and the Gospel was preached to all nations. At this time the relations which existed between heaven and earth underwent a great alteration. The worship of the sun, moon, and stars was abolished in many places, the false gods with which they had filled heaven were set aside, and just views of the supreme Being were attained by many, while God lifted the covering of darkness which had been spread over all nations, offered Himself to them as their gracious God, and invited them, as His people, to come into the communion of the Church. But though the change which then happened was great—so great as to be set forth by such terms as God's shaking the heavens and the earth—yet it does not correspond to the magnificence of the scene delineated in the words before us. The seeds of prosperity and coming happiness were then sown. But then judgment kept pace with mercy. The word was received in much affliction; and nearly all the Churches had to endure severe and fiery trials, while on the literal Jerusalem the wrath of God fell and consumed it. We agree, therefore, with those who look upon the text as characterizing the state of the Church in the millennium. The glory of the Church will then outshine and eclipse all the happiness that has ever been seen on earth, and exceed the loftiest expectations of the saints. 1. It will be a period of unparalleled gracious communications on the part of God. The heavens will then seem to be opened, and the Divine Persons to smile on man. The whole of that time shall be a season of gracious refreshing from the presence of the Lord. 2. It will be a period of clear and universal knowledge. 3. Of extraordinary holiness. This is the result which sanctified knowledge invariably produces. 4. It will be a period of unprecedented joy. In ver. 16 it is said, that "the former troubles shall be forgotten;" and in ver. 18 God says, "be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." The state of the Church will be so prosperous, and the benefits conferred upon its members so full and so gracious, as to afford to all the highest causes of gladness. There will be a joy derived from clear and exalted views of Divine truth; from sin overcome, grace imparted, and holiness promoted; from realized communion with God, and from heavenly contemplations. 5. It will be a time of cordial union and love. 6. Of universal peace and liberty. 7. Of remarkable outward prosperity. 8. All things shall be subordinated to the interests of religion. The world and its engagements are now too frequently injurious to the growth of piety. But, then, the service of God will be the one grand business that will engage all hearts and all hands. (*A. Somerville.*) *God rejoicing in the new creation*:—This passage, like the rest of Isaiah's closing chapters, will have completest fulfilment in the latter days when Christ shall come. But the work which is spoken of is begun already among us. There is to be a literal new creation, but that new creation has commenced already; therefore, even now we ought to manifest a part of the joy. Do you know what this work of creation is, which is here thrice promised in the words, "I create . . . I create . . . I create"? It is evidently a second creation, which is altogether to eclipse the first, and put it out of mind. Concerning the joy to which we are called, we would say—I. IT IS A JOY IN CREATION. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." It is a most right and excellent thing that you and I should rejoice in the natural creation of God. The man who is altogether bad seldom delights in nature, but gets away into the artificial and the sensual. One of the purest and most innocent of joys, apart from spiritual things, in which a man can indulge, is a joy in the works of God. Much more is there something bright and pure and spiritually exhilarating in rejoicing in God's higher works, in God's spiritual works, in God's new creation. There is no one of the attributes of God which has not its illustration under the economy of grace; and blessed shall your whole being be if you can to the full rejoice in that which God creates. There is one reason why you are called upon to

rejoice in it, namely, that you are a part of it. When I lay sore sick and tormented in body, it seemed always to be such a joy to me that I myself, my inner self, my spirit, had been new-created, and that my nobler part could rise above the suffering, and soar into the pure heavens of the spiritual realm; and I said of this poor body, "Thou hast not yet been new-created; but thou shalt yet be delivered." II. IT IS A JOY WHICH WILL ECLIPSE ALL THAT HAS GONE BEFORE. "And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." God's great new-creating work ought to fill us with such joy as to make us forget the old creation, as though we said to ourselves:—What are the sun and the moon? We shall not have need of these variable lights in the perfection of the new creation, for in heaven, "they need no candle, neither light of the sun." What is the sea, though it be the very mirror of beauty? In that new creation there will be no more sea, and storms and tempests will be all unknown. What are these luxuries of sight and hearing? We shall not want them when our eyes shall behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. The joy of the spiritual is such that, while it admits the joy of the natural, yet, nevertheless, it swallows it up as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. As an instance of the expulsive powers of a new delight, we all know how the memory of the old dispensation is gone from us. Did any one of you ever weep because you did not sit at the Passover? Did you ever regret the Paschal lamb? Never, because you have fed on Christ. I want you to feel just the same with regard to all your former life as you now feel towards that old dispensation. The world is dead to you, and you to the world. You have a higher pleasure now which enchants your soul. III. IT IS A PRESENT AND A LASTING JOY. "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." Be glad in anything that the Lord has created in you. Find your joy, also, in the new creation of God, as you see it in others. I think it is very beautiful where John Bunyan represents Christiana and Mercy as admiring each other. They had both enjoyed a wash in that wonderful beauty-giving bath, and Mercy said to Christiana, "How beautiful you are! I never saw any one look so lovely as you are." But Christiana said that she was not beautiful at all; she could not see anything about herself to admire, while in Mercy she saw everything to esteem and love. Oh, to have an eye for the work of God in other people, and to rejoice in it! Such an eye sees not itself, and yet it is itself one of God's loveliest works. IV. IT IS A JOY WHICH GOD INTENDED FOR US. "For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." He has made the new city, the new people, the new world to be a source of joy. Take Jerusalem as the emblem of the Church of God. God always intended that His chosen, called, and converted people should be a rejoicing. God intended not only that we should have joy, but that we should spread it among others. As soon as ever we are converted, what is one of the first things that comes of it? Why, joy. But, by-and-by, there will be a still greater joy. We shall enter into heaven, and there will be joy among the angels, and joy in our heart over God's new-creation work, which will proceed at a glorious rate. Then the nations will be converted to God. I know not when, nor exactly how, but the day shall come when Christ shall reign from pole to pole. V. IT IS A JOY IN WHICH WE SHALL SHARE WITH GOD. "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 20. **There shall be no more thence an infant of days.**—*Longevity:*—The whole is a highly poetical description of longevity, to be explained precisely like the promise of new heavens and a new earth (ver. 17). (*J. A. Alexander.*) **The child shall die an hundred years old.**—*Youth and age:*—There is promised a practical annihilation of the line which divides youth and age. Youth shall be wise and age shall be ardent. We are to study the spirit of youth in history and in the Church. Hope, enthusiasm, energy, and audacity are elemental forces in youth. Youth makes mistakes, but age magnifies difficulties. Age regards that impossible which to youth presents the prospect of success. Most of the leaders of our American Revolution were under forty, and the same fact appears in European history, so that Disraeli was right in saying, "The history of heroes is the history of youth." So in art. Raphael died at thirty-seven, Keats at twenty-two, Shelley before thirty, and Professor Clifford at thirty-five. The time for action is the morning! There is a fiery enthusiasm in youth. It is to be utilized. Luther was but twenty-four when he denounced the Papal Church, and Calvin twenty-six when he wrote his great work, "The Institutes." So with Wesley and Summerfield, who made themselves felt in early manhood. Robertson, of Brighton, died at thirty-four. Though preaching to but few, he has influenced the world by his broad and catholic views.

Henry Martyn died at thirty-two, and Harriet Newell when hardly out of girlhood. Is youth blind? It is sometimes good to be blind to danger and difficulty, uninfluenced by discouragements, if only awake to the grandeur of the work and the promised alliance of God! I. THE ELDER SHOULD NOT BE JEALOUS OF THE YOUNGER. It is pitiful to see a cynical spirit shown toward those who are coming to take our places. Better imitate the magnanimous temper of John, who said, as he saw the growing popularity of the Master, "He must increase, I must decrease." The coming generation must do their own thinking and make their own philosophies. Wisdom was not born with us. It will not die with us. God honours individuality. He makes faces unlike and minds unlike. II. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE ALERT TO TRAIN YOUTH TO BE EQUAL TO THE DEMANDS OF THE AGE. Its offices of trust should not be wholly in the hands of old persons. III. SOME PEOPLE NEVER SEEM TO LOSE THEIR YOUTH. It is a lovely sight to see the youthful spirit strong at seventy. It is like seeing a river pouring its life through a desert. IV. WE LEARN HOW TO CONTINUE TO BE YOUTHFUL. If linked to Christ, how can we be otherwise than glad and growing, hopeful and purposeful? A vital, vivid, constant faith in God feeds enthusiasm with perpetual strength. Suffering often brings a deep, quiet joy. Shrink not from it. Moreover, we can cultivate this youthful spirit. We can compel ourselves to look on the bright side of things. They who believe that all things work together for good to those who love God ought to be continually young. (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*) "*The child shall die an hundred years old*":—The verse is a puzzling one. But none the less it is true. The more Christlike men and women become, the nearer they grow to absolute childlikeness. It is with them as with the ripe corn in the autumn; the corn bends its head down again to the ground out of which it sprang in the spring. Just so the saints of God, in their maturity, in their noblest and wisest and heavenliest estate here on earth, resemble most the children—resemble them in their trustfulness and teachableness and lowliness. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) *A child-man*:—When James Clerk Maxwell, loaded as he was with his scientific learning, lay dying, these were his last words: "Lay me down lower, for I am very low myself, and it suits me to lie low;" and then, with a long, loving look at his wife, he went home to God. He was a man, but he died as a child. (*Ibid.*) **But the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed.**—*The aged sinner*:—I. IT IS NOT USUAL FOR A MAN TO LIVE TO THE AGE OF A HUNDRED YEARS. Some, indeed, have lived so long, but their number has been very small, and he who flatters himself that he shall do so is both vain and foolish. II. As it is not usual for any man to live to the age of a hundred years, SO IT IS LESS LIKELY THAT THE SINNER SHOULD LIVE SO LONG. The way of a sinner is such as naturally tends to shorten his days, and provoke God to destroy him. III. IF A WICKED MAN SHOULD LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED YEARS OLD, YET HE MUST DIE AT LAST. IV. WHENEVER WICKED MEN DIE, WHETHER IT BE IN YOUTH OR EXTREME OLD AGE, THEY DIE ACCURSED. Some of them are cursed by their fellow-creatures, whom they have injured or oppressed; but, above all, they are under the curse of God. It is a dreadful thing to live under a curse, but it is far worse to die under one; yet this is the awful condition of such as live and die in their sins. They may possess much, and have their houses, lands and estates, but it is with a curse; they may also hope for more, but when it comes it is with a curse. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Ver. 22. **As the days of a tree.**—*Trees*:—Of all natural objects trees have the closest fellowship with man. When growing together in dense primeval forests they indeed exclude his presence, and the gloom and solitude produce an awe as of the supernatural world. But in the open cultivated spaces around his home they become domesticated, and are regarded with a sentiment akin to affection. God first talked with man under their shadow; man's first worship was helped, if not inspired, by the solemn sights and sounds of the grove, the flitting lights and shades as of mysterious shapes, and the whispered secrets of the leaves; and the pillared aisles and groined interlacing of branches first suggested to him the ideas of architectural beauty which grew into permanent shape in the house of prayer. The heart twines around them some of its most fragrant memories; and at the end of every vista of the vanished years we see through the golden light a favourite tree associated with some cherished incident of the past. Trees are often planted as memorials of visits to celebrated scenes, or at the birth of an heir to an estate. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *As the days of a tree*:—These human associations give to the emblem of the prophet a touching significance. It is a very appropriate emblem. The comparison between the two

kinds of life is very close. In every particular connected with organic existence, in the laws of their development, decay and reproduction, trees and human beings are complete counterparts of one another. Even their structure to a certain extent is similar. The leaves correspond to the lungs and digestive organs; the blossoms represent the distinctions of sex; and the names of trunk, arms, and limbs are given indiscriminately to similar parts of both organisms. But if we inquire what a tree really is, we shall find in the emblem a correspondence still more profound. A tree is generally supposed to be a single individual, in the same sense that a man is an individual. It passes through a period of youth, maturity and old age. It has a fixed limit of size and age. It gradually loses its vital properties, and ceases to perform its vital functions. But this popular view is altogether erroneous. A tree is not a single individual; it is an aggregate of separate, independent individuals, a composite organism in which there is no centralization of life, and all the parts are frequently repeated: there being as many lungs as there are leaves, and as many organs of reproduction as there are blossoms. Each shoot is a distinct plant performing the functions of nutrition and propagation by and for itself, but, by virtue of its organic union with the rest of the tree, contributing to the general welfare, and helping to build up the common fabric. Cut off—its removal would not virtually injure the tree, nor impair its own vitality; and planted in the soil, it would strike root and in course of time grow to the same size as its parent. A tree may thus be said to be a colony of plants growing vertically instead of horizontally. Regarding a tree, then, as a body corporate, consisting of an aggregate of living and dead plants, the dead enclosed and preserved in the tissues of the living, and the living continually reproducing and grafting themselves upon one another, it follows necessarily that there is no physical limit to the size it may attain, or to the age it may reach. From its very nature a tree is immortal. It may go on growing and enlarging for ages, and after thousands of years be still in the full vigour of its existence. Even in Europe, where man has so long held sway, and has ever been destroying the woods and forests, individual trees have survived since the commencement of the Christian era, and their vigorous hold of life seems to secure them a longevity in comparison with which the period already passed may be no more than their early youth; while in other less-known parts of the world trees are to be found whose enormous size would indicate that they reached back to the origin of the existing state of the globe. From the nature of a tree as a composite social organism, it also necessarily follows that it is exempt from death by old age. The individual plants whose combination constitutes the corporate body, being only annuals, may be said to die of old age in autumn, when the leaves fade and fall. But as regards the whole organism there is no such thing as old age. (*Ibid.*) *The tree of life:*—These considerations help us to understand more clearly why a tree should have been chosen as the sacrament or symbol of immortality in Eden, and why it should represent the eternal felicity of the redeemed in the heavenly paradise. The expression "tree of life," acquires a new and deeper significance when we remember that there is nothing else with life that bridges across the centuries, connects departed dynasties and systems of religion with modern governments and fresh creeds, and binds the sympathies of the human heart with the sorrows and joys of other ages dead and gone. (*Ibid.*) *"As the days of a tree": the Jews:*—How truly applicable to the marvellous history of the Jews! As trees are the oldest of living organisms, so the Jews are the oldest of living races. Though the least of all people, unable to compete in the arts of life with the nations of antiquity, they have outlived the wisest and most powerful of them. The people that oppressed and led them captive have perished, leaving behind only a few nameless ruins; the kingdoms whose glory overshadowed theirs have vanished, and left not even a wreck behind. But the Jews have still lived on. Like their own cedars of Lebanon they have survived the storms and vicissitudes of ages, and endured while all else has perished around them. Although the trunk and main stem of the Jews may be withered away, and only a fragment remain, yet this fragment is as full of life, is as green and flourishing, as in the brightest days of prosperity. And from this fragment will spring up a new and glorious tree. The tree, rather than the "everlasting hills," may have been chosen by the prophet as the symbol of the perpetuity of God's people, not only because it has life, and is therefore a more appropriate emblem of life, not only because of its power of indefinite longevity and increase, but also, as Dr. Harvey has suggested, because it is possessed only of a contingent perpetuity. In its own nature a tree is immortal, but it is subject to accidents which impair its vitality and lead to decay and death. Most trees die of mechanical injuries; a storm breaks off a branch and

inflicts a wound which exposes the inner heart-wood to the weather, decay takes place, the inside of the trunk becomes hollow, and, incapable of offering resistance, it is hurled to the ground by a fiercer blast of wind than usual. Many trees are placed in unsuitable situations, where they are too much crowded by other trees, or too much exposed to the wind, or where the soil does not afford sufficient nourishment to them, and they die of hunger. Their own growth, by hardening and compressing their tissues, prevents the roots of the young shoots from growing, and the sap from rising freely upwards, and thus they are choked out of life. Add to these causes the manifold destructive influences of nature and the necessities and caprices of men, and it will be at once seen that the great majority of trees must perish ere they have reached their prime, and that even the oldest and largest must finally disappear. This circumstance may have been meant to infuse a salutary warning into the gracious assurance of the text. The days of God's people would be like the days of a tree so long as they obeyed the laws of truth and righteousness, by which the stability of a nation is maintained; but, like the tree, their days would be cut short prematurely, if they exposed themselves by disobedience to the forces which inevitably bring all that is evil to an end. (*Ibid.*) *The tree of life:*—Many of the ablest scholars, ancient and modern, hold to the opinion that the true rendering of the passage is this: "As the days of *the* tree, are the days of My people"—"as the days," that is, of the "tree of life!" And there is very much to be said in favour of this rendering. The Tree of Life in Eden—that first of sacraments—was designed to sustain and refresh the life infused into man at his creation. To us, however, there is another Tree of Life, even the Cross of Christ. The body broken, and the blood shed upon that Tree, are to us the means of resurrection and immortality. And, again, there is another Tree of Life, to which as yet we can only look in faith, that, namely, which is fast beside the river that issues forth beneath the throne of God and of the Lamb—which bears its twelvefold fruit twelve times within the twelvemonth, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. "As the days of the Tree, are the days of My people." Their destiny is to feed on the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God; and as the days of that Tree are never ending, never darkened, so shall the days of God's people be. (*Ibid.*) *Christian life imaged by the trees of the earth:*—I. THE DURABILITY OF THE CHURCH, of which the Saviour has said, "The gates of hell," of death, "shall not prevail against it." That which is true of the Church collectively is true of the humblest living member of the Church; for he shall reign, shall share in the rule of his Saviour, for ever and ever. II. THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH AND OF EVERY CHRISTIAN IS TO BE ONE OF DAILY, NOISELESS GROWTH. Nurtured by the sunshine and the rain, by sorrow and joy, by temptation and quiet, exposed to all, and strengthened by all, flourishing like a palm-tree amidst the summer heats, and growing amid snows like a cedar in Lebanon (Ps. xcii. 12). III. NOT ONLY GROWING AMID THE CHANGES OF EARTH, BUT DRAWING NOURISHMENT FROM ALL. The Christian is planted here, has his allotted duties here (Ps. xcii. 13), as the tree is rooted in earth. Both derive nourishment from the earth. Trials, affliction, spiritual and fleshly temptations, and the winds of false doctrine, should but strengthen the Christian. IV. IT IS FRUIT-BEARING. (*W. Denton, M.A.*)

Ver. 24. **And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer.**—*The Church in harmony with God's will:*—The will of the Church of the new Jerusalem will be Jehovah's will to such a degree that he already hears and fulfils the slightest movement of prayer in the heart, the prayer but half-uttered. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Divine willingness to hear prayer.*—I. MAN NEEDS TO CALL UPON AND SPEAK TO GOD. What is man's greatest need? To him who believes in a future world—eternal life. To whom shall he go for this? He must call upon God. This is shown—1. From the consciousness of an existing want which cannot be supplied. (1) By himself. (a) From within. (b) From without. (2) By the world. (a) Its inhabitants. (b) Its wealth. (c) Its pleasures. 2. From the fact that light, pardon, guidance, comfort, heaven, can only be had from God. II. MAN IS ENCOURAGED TO CALL UPON AND SPEAK UNTO GOD. This is shown by four considerations of God's dealings with man—1. Opening the way of approach to Himself by His Word. 2. Teaching the way by His servants. 3. Directing in the way by His Spirit. 4. Distinctly promising to bless all who come in the way. But from the text we learn explicitly that man is encouraged to call upon and speak unto God. "Before they call, I will answer." God perceives and realizes the desires of the Christian heart. Amid all the complex movements of the universe, He sees the unfolding of the praying heart, and, swifter than the lightning flash, the answer

comes. David found it so (Ps. xxxii. 5), so did Daniel (Dan. x. 12), and we have found it so (Matt. vi. 8). "And while they are yet speaking I will hear." God is willing to listen to the articulated wish of the Christian hearts. Amid the clash of nations' strife, the busy hum of struggling humanity, the hoarse cries for sensual pleasure, the blasphemies of the lewd, the groans of the crushed and disappointed, He listens to the speaking of His children, and hears the faintest whispered want. Illustrations: The Israelites at Mizpeh (1 Sam. vii.); David's triumph over his enemies (Ps. vi. 8, 9); Daniel and the seventy weeks (Dan. ix. 21); Cornelius (Acts x. 3). (*J. R. Hargreaves.*)

CHAPTER LXVI.

VERS. 1, 2. Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne.—*The eternal blessedness of the true Israel; the doom of the apostates:*—This chapter continues the antithesis that runs through chap. lxv., carrying it onward to its eschatological issues. The connection of ideas is frequently extremely difficult to trace, and no two cities are agreed as to where the different sections begin and end. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Temple building:*—Hitzig thinks (and with him Knobel, Hendewerk) that the author here begins quite abruptly to oppose the purpose of building a temple to Jehovah; the builders are those who meditated remaining behind in Chaldea, and wished also to have a temple, as the Jews in Egypt, at a later time, built one in Leontopolis. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The offerings of the impenitent offensive to God:*—The address, directed to the entire body ready to return, says without distinction that Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, needs no house made by men's hands; then in the entire body distinguishes between the penitent and those alienated from God, rejects all worship and offering at the hand of the latter, and threatens them with just retribution. (*Ibid.*) *The inward and spiritual preferred by God to the outward and material:*—[These great words] are a declaration, spoken probably in view of the approaching restoration of the temple (which, in itself, the prophet entirely approves, chap. xliv. 28, and expects, chaps. lvi. 7, lx. 7. lxii. 9), reminding the Jews of the truth which a visible temple might readily lead them to forget, that no earthly habitation could be really adequate to Jehovah's majesty, and that Jehovah's regard was not to be won by the magnificence of a material temple, but by humility and the devotion of the heart. How needful the warning was history shows. Jeremiah (chap. vii. 1–15) argues at length against those who pointed, with a proud sense of assurance, to the massive pile of buildings that crowned the height of Zion, heedless of the moral duties which loyalty to the King, whose residence it was, implied. And at a yet more critical moment in their history, attachment to the temple, as such, was one of the causes which incapacitated the Jews from appropriating the more spiritual teaching of Christ: the charge brought against Stephen (Acts vi. 13, 14) is that he ceased not "to speak words against this holy place and the law;" and the argument of Stephen's defence (Acts vii.) is just to show that in the past God's favour had not been limited to the period during which the temple of Zion existed. Here, then, the prophet seizes the occasion to insist upon the necessity of a spiritual service, passing on (vers. 3–5) to denounce, in particular, certain superstitious usages which had apparently, at the time, infected the worship of Jehovah. (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The inwardness of religion:*—1. The tendency to make religion consist in external actions, apart from the inward dispositions which should accompany them, is very common. The reason for this is discovered from the fact that outward actions are easier than inward. It is easier, for instance, to become outwardly poor than to become poor in spirit; easier to adore with the body than to worship with the soul. The tendency is observable in all dispensations. For instance, whatever other differences there may have been between the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, we are expressly told that it was "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice" (Heb. xi. 4). The outward act was linked with the right inward disposition. So, again, in the time of the Levitical Law, the tendency often manifested itself to put ceremonial above moral obligations (Ps. l.). And Isaiah, in his first chapter (vers. 11–18), shows how an outward service, without the putting away of evil, is an abomination to God. In the same

way our Lord condemned the Pharisees (Matt. xv. 8). 2. This closing prophecy of Isaiah seems to contain a warning against formalism. It is not that the outward is unimportant, for this would be to run from one extreme to the other, but that the outward alone will not avail. The return of Israel from captivity will be followed by the building of a new temple, as the event has shown; and the warning of the text is twofold—one, to remind the Israelites that Jehovah had no need of a temple; the other, to impress them with a truth they were very apt to forget, that religion must be a matter of the heart. I. A REVELATION OF GOD. "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool." 1. These words, or the substance of them, are again and again repeated in Holy Scripture (1 Kings viii. 27; Matt. v. 34; Acts vii. 49). Repetitions in the Bible show the importance of a truth, or our difficulty in remembering it. 2. What is the truth? That God is incomprehensible. He is everywhere and cannot be localized (Jer. xxiii. 24). There is nowhere where God's power and essence and presence do not reach. He knows no limit of space or time, of knowledge or love. II. THE REFERENCE TO THE EXTERNAL TEMPLE. "Where is the house that ye build unto Me?" 1. These words are not intended to deter Israel from building a material temple when they had returned to their own land. The prophet would be contradicting himself (Isa. lvi. 5–7; lx. 7); and he would be running counter to the solemn injunctions of other prophets, such as Haggai and Zechariah, who were in part raised up by God to further the work of building the temple. What the words are intended to rebuke is the falseness of the ideas that God requires a temple, and that His presence can be restricted to its walls. God does not need a temple, but we do. In heaven there will be no necessity for any temple (Rev. xxi. 22), where the glory of God and of the Lamb floods with its radiance the whole place. 2. Here the church, with its sacred objects and associations, appeals to us and excites our devotion; here in the sacred place there is a distinct promise to prayer; here God acts upon us, and we upon God, through prescribed ordinances; here He promises to be present in some especial manner; here we act upon one another, and kindle fervour, and therefore must not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" in the house of God (Heb. x. 25). III. BUT THE TEXT ALLUDES TO THE INTERNAL TEMPLE—THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE SOUL OF THE WORSHIPPER, WHICH ATTRACT THE FAVOUR OF GOD. "To this man will I look, . . . who is poor, . . . contrite, and who trembleth at My word." 1. Poor, not merely outwardly, but poor in spirit (Ps. cxxxviii. 6). The man who at all realizes the Divine majesty will have a sense of his own nothingness. 2. Of a contrite spirit. A perception of the Divine holiness brings self-humiliation by force of contrast (Job xlii. 6). 3. "Trembleth at My word." Fear is ever an element of the spirit of worship. A sense of the Divine justice and judgments fills the soul with awe in approaching God. The Word or revelation of God is received, not in the spirit of criticism, but with reverence and godly fear. IV. LESSONS. 1. The remembrance of the all-pervading presence of God should be a deterrent from evil, and an incentive to good. 2. The obligation of regularity in attendance at Divine worship ought to be insisted upon, both as a recognition of God and our relations with Him, and for the sake of the subjective effects on human character. 3. But outward worship is of no avail without inward. There are tests, in the text, of the presence of the spirit of worship—lowliness, contrition, and awe, as products of the realization of God's presence and perfections. (*The Thinker.*) *God's elevation and condescension:*—1. The subject of remark—God Himself. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, the earth is My footstool." The attention is turned simply to God—His grandeur, His magnificence, His immensity, His omnipresence. He abides in heaven, He puts the earth under His feet. 2. The manner in which the remark about God is conducted, is that of a kind of contrast betwixt Him and men. "Where is the house that ye build unto Me, and where is the place of My rest?" God is unlike man. He challenges any comparison. "The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him." Ancient kings aimed often to impress their subjects with an idea of their magnificence, and surrounded themselves with a solemn and salutary awe, by rearing palaces of the most imposing splendour and magnificence. They wished to overawe the multitude. On this ground, God Himself seems to have ordered the unequalled grandeur of the ancient temple. But in doing it, He took care that its dazzling beauty and stateliness should only be an aid, a stepping-stone, to assist the imagination in its upward reach towards the grandeur of God. In the prayer of the dedication, Solomon's devotion soars infinitely above the temple. Here, the majesty of God, and the littleness of man, stand side by side. After mentioning the earth and the heaven, God says, "All these things

hath My hand made." 3. But yet, lest dread should too much terrify the worshipper, or a high and just idea of God's infinite majesty lead the humble into the error of supposing that such an august Being would not regard such an insignificant creature as man, He adds, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." A turn of thought well worthy of our admiration. A contrite sinner has nothing to fear from God. His very majesty need not terrify him. Indeed, His majesty constitutes the very ground for his encouragement. It can condescend. Just as much does the King of kings and Lord of lords glorify Himself, when He consoles, by the whisperings of His Spirit, the poorest and most unworthy sinner that ever felt the pangs of a bruised heart, as when He thunders in the heavens as the most High, and gives His voice, hail-stones and coals of fire. With this idea, sinners should approach Him and meditate His grandeur. (*I. S. Spencer, D.D.*) *The magnificence of God:*—I. THE STYLE OF THE TEXT. God speaks of Himself. "The heaven is My throne, the earth is My footstool." This style of religious address is especially common in the Scriptures (Ps. cxxxvii.; Job xi. 7, 8; xxvi. 6–14; Isa. xl.). These passages all speak of God in a style which we cannot attempt to analyze. Their aim appears to be twofold. 1. To lead us to make the idea of God Himself the leading idea in religion. 2. To have this idea, which we are to entertain about God, an idea of the utmost grandeur, of the most amazing magnificence, and solemn sublimity. II. THE DESIGN IN VIEW CANNOT EASILY BE MISTAKEN. They would give us just ideas of God. The impression they aim to make is simply this, that God is incomparably and inconceivably above us—an infinite and awful mystery! III. THE NECESSITY OF THIS MAY EXIST ON DIFFERENT GROUNDS. 1. Our littleness. In the nature of the case, there can be no comparison betwixt man and God. All is contrast—an infinite contrast. 2. Our sinfulness. Sin never exists aside from the mind's losing a just impression of the Deity; and wherever it exists, there is a tendency to cleave to low and unworthy ideas of Him. 3. Our materiality, the connection of our minds with material and gross bodies. This connection renders it difficult for us to soar beyond matter. We are in danger of introducing the imperfections of our existence into our religion, even into our ideas of God. Consequently, when God speaks to us of Himself, He speaks in a manner designed to guard us from error. He says to us, "The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house ye build unto Me?" We are limited to the world. We cannot get foothold anywhere else. We are circumscribed within very narrow limits. But God asks, "Where is the place of My rest?" He would elevate our conceptions of Him beyond matter, out of the reach of its bounds. 4. The nature of God. Man is only a creature. He owes his existence to a cause without him. That cause still rules him. That cause allows him to know but little, and often drops the veil of an impenetrable darkness before his eyes just at the point, the very point, where he is most desirous to look further, and it drops the veil there, in order to do him the twofold office of convincing him of the grandeur of God and his own littleness, and of compelling him, under the influence of those convictions, to turn back to a light which concerns him more than the darkness beyond the veil can, to a light where are wrapped up the duties and interests of his immortal soul. God would repress his curiosity, and make him use his conscience. Therefore, He makes darkness preach to him. IV. APPLICATION. 1. Let us be admonished to approach the study of religion with a solemnity of mind which belongs to it. It is the study of God. The voice comes from the burning bush, "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground." How unlike all other subjects is religion! How differently we should approach it! 2. This mode in which God teaches us—this grandeur and magnificence which belong to Him—ought to remove a very common difficulty from our minds, and prepare us to receive in faith, those deep and dark doctrines, whose mystery is so apt to stagger us. What can we expect? 3. Since God is so vast a being, how deep should be our humility! 4. How deep should be our homage! 5. The greatness of God should gauge the depth of our repentance. Our sin is against Him. 6. The greatness of God should invite our faith. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" 7. The magnificence of God should be a motive to our service. He is able to turn our smallest services to an infinite account. 8. The greatness of God ought to encourage the timid. Because He is great, His regard reaches to every one of your annoyances. Your enemies cannot hurt you. 9. The grandeur of God ought to rebuke our reliance upon creatures. (*Ibid.*) *What God does not, and what He does, regard:*—I. WHAT THE LORD DOES NOT REGARD. He

speaks quite slightingly of this great building. But is it not said elsewhere that "the Lord loved the courts of Zion"? Did He not expressly tell King Solomon when his temple was completed, "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be on it perpetually"? He did; but in what sense are we to understand those words? Not that He delighted in the grandeur of the house, but in as much of spiritual worship as was rendered there. The temple itself was no otherwise well pleasing to Him than as it was raised in obedience to His orders, and as it served, in its fashion and its furniture, for "an example and a shadow of heavenly things;" but the Lord "loved the gates of Zion" because the prayers of Zion were presented there. He points out to us two things—His throne, and His footstool! and then He leaves it to ourselves to say whether any building man can raise to Him can be considerable in His eyes. II. Hear from the Lord's own lips THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MAN WHO DRAWS HIS EYE. "To this man," etc. I. The sort of character described. (1) He is "poor"—humble towards God. He is humble, too, towards his fellow-creatures; carrying himself meekly towards all men, and "in lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than himself." He is "slow to wrath"—patient under provocation—anxious not to be "overcome of evil" but rather to "overcome evil with good." (2) Another quality which marks the man to whom the Lord looks is contrition. (3) He "trembleth at My word." But what kind of trembling is meant? Felix trembled at God's word; and many a wicked man from his days to the present has trembled at it also. And yet it has been but a momentary pang—a sudden fright that has come over them, but which they have soon laughed off again. Now it is certainly not this sort of trembling which the Lord regards. The man who "trembleth" at God's word is one who entertains a deep and abiding reverence for every word which hath proceeded from God's lips. 2. What does the Lord mean when He saith, "To this man will I look"? He evidently means, "To this man will I look with an eye of notice and regard." The Lord's favourable look, be it remembered, is quite another thing from man's; there is help, and comfort, and support conveyed by it (chap. lvii. 15). The Lord but looked on Gideon, and Gideon, weak before, was wonderfully strengthened (Judg. vi. 14). (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *God's greater glory:*—Here are described two phases of the Divine greatness, one material, and the other moral; the superiority of the latter being clearly implied. I. THE MATERIAL GREATNESS OF GOD. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool." Here God represents Himself as a mighty potentate, leaving us to infer the measure of His kingly glory and the extent of His dominion from these two things—His throne and His footstool. Thus the glory of the whole is indicated by the glory of the part. 1. The throne. We must note carefully the full extent and purport of the figure, "The heaven is My throne." It is not that the heaven is the place of His throne, but that the heaven is itself the throne. The conception, bold as it is, strikingly agrees with another figure used by inspiration to set forth the transcendent majesty of God, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." The figure is a bold one. The human imagination, daring as its flights often are, could never have conceived it. It is purely a Divine conception, and the text is careful to say so, "Thus saith the Lord." 2. His footstool. "The earth." We know very little of the heaven. We know a great deal about the earth. Men have taken its dimensions, explored its resources, and discovered its glories. Yet this magnificent object is but His footstool. The footstool is the humblest article of furniture in the household; so needless is it deemed that thousands of houses dispense with it altogether. Others easily convert the thing nearest to hand into a footstool, as occasion may require. Nevertheless, some have expended no little skill and expense upon the construction even of footstools. There is preserved as a relic in Windsor Castle such an article, once belonging to the renowned Hindoo prince, Tippoo Sahib. It is in the form of a bear's head, carved in ivory, with a tongue of gold, teeth of crystal, and its eyes a pair of rubies. This article is adjudged worth £10,000. It is after all but a footstool. If Tippoo Sahib's footstool were so magnificent, what must have been the splendour of his throne! Yet, were all the thrones of the world collected together into one vast pile, they would form but a heap of rubbish as compared with God's footstool. II. THE TEXT PRESENTS US WITH ANOTHER PHASE OF HIS GLORY—THE MORAL, WHICH IS ALSO HIS GREATER GLORY. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." What a contrast we have presented to us here. God, the Mighty Potentate, from the height of His heavenly throne, looking down with yearning, compassionate regard upon such objects as are here described, the very dust of His

footstool. There is a moral grandeur in this far transcending the power of language to describe. In order to appreciate fully the beauty and glory of this act, we must notice particularly the characters which are its special objects. They are described as those who are "poor" and are "of a contrite spirit," and that "tremble at His word." These several expressions do not describe one and the same condition. They indicate three distinct and progressive stages of spiritual experience. 1. Destitution. "Poor." It is not physical poverty that is meant, for the wealthiest, those who abound most in worldly possessions, are equally with the most destitute in the condition here indicated by the term "poor." It describes a spiritual condition—the spiritual poverty into which all men are reduced through sin—the wretched, the miserable, the oppressed of sin and guilt—the poor in the sense of being without hope, destitute of true peace and happiness. 2. The second stage indicated is one of conviction—the misery becoming a felt fact. "And of a contrite spirit." In these words we have indicated that condition of the mind when the all-crushing fact of its poverty and wretchedness has come home with overwhelming conviction. 3. The third stage is one of hope. "Trembleth at My word." God, out of the infinite depth of His compassion, hath spoken to this poor, wretched, sin-convicted creature, and the word spoken is a word of hope. The "trembling" at the word does not mean regarding it with fear, terror, or dismay, but solemnly, feelingly, and trustingly. It is the trembling of gratitude and of an awakened hope—an exquisite thrill of gratitude piercing the whole soul, causing it to vibrate with responsive joy to the message of hope. This wonderful condescension of God in relation to sinful men is His greater glory, it redounds to His honour far more than His conversion of the heavens into His throne and of the earth into His footstool. (*A. J. Parry.*)

Worship and ritual:—The desire for Divine communion has ever been strong in man. This desire was originated by God Himself. If not from God, whence could it come? We have no right to suppose it to be self-originated. That finite man should conceive an infinite Deity is an incredible supposition, for, to use the words of Pascal, "the infinite God is infinitely inconceivable." The manner in which God has thus revealed Himself in response to the passionate desire which He originated in man is a study fraught with a singular interest. He made Himself known to our first parents in Eden's garden, and in our first Scriptures we have several examples recorded of revelations made by Him after the banishment to the fathers of our race. By tradition these revelations were spread throughout the earth, and so we find the earliest religious faiths of our world abounding in sublime truths. But He specially revealed Himself to a chosen people. Israel lived under the very shadow of Jehovah, for God dwelt in that temple and specially manifested His presence in it. But that presence did not restrain the people from rebellion. When not open followers of the idolatries of the surrounding nations, they left worship for ritual and forsook God for observances, and so made that temple to be at once their glory and their shame. It was at such time as this that the words of our text were uttered. Thus are we taught that Divine worship is not material, but spiritual, and that the habitation of God is not the building, but the soul. I. THE NATURE OF THE BEING WHOM WE WORSHIP. Our text brings before us His omnipresence. He is in heaven, and He is on earth. We have a revelation also of the Divine omnipotence. Not only is He in heaven, not only is He on earth, but He has a throne. Of course the one includes the other. If He be the omnipresent One, He is also the omnipotent One. That which is Infinite must be Absolute. We, however, distinguish, so as to obtain clearer conceptions. We are in danger of supposing that amidst all this vastness we can be but of little consequence. But mind is greater than matter, and such ideas immediately vanish when we remember that the vastest material substance can never outweigh a holy thought, a feeling of devotion, a thrill of love. The man who can tell the motions of the stars is greater than the stars. And thus looking at the question, what shall we say of that man in whom God dwells? He who lives in a palace is greater than the palace, no matter how gorgeous it may be; and in the presence of a holy man the whole material creation is dwarfed into nothingness. II. THE NATURE OF THAT WORSHIP WHICH THIS GREAT GOD REQUIRES. It must be something more than outward. Of all ceremonialism the Jewish was the most gorgeous. It was also of Divine appointing. The temple was built according to Divine plan and under Divine direction. The services were divinely commanded. The priests belonged to a Divinely set apart tribe. Tokens of the Divine presence were given. But although this ceremonial was thus gorgeous, and of Divine appointment, yet God rejected it so soon as it lost its spiritual significance. All true religion begins in poverty of spirit. There must

be a sense of natural defect and a consciousness of our own inability either to atone for the past or to deliver in the future. And with this poverty of spirit there must be contriteness. The heart needs to be broken before it can be bound up. (*Allan Rees.*) *A transcendent existence and a transcendent doctrine:*—I. AN EXISTENCE THAT STANDS IN CONTRAST WITH ALL THAT IS CREATED. 1. Here is an omnipresent Existence. One whose throne is heaven, whose footstool is earth, and to whom all places are alike. One who fills heaven and earth, not merely with His influence, but with His actual presence, as much at all times in one point of space as in another. The incommensurable One, not only everywhere, as the pantheists teach, as a substance, but everywhere as a Personality, free, conscious, active. All created existences are limited by the laws of space, and those that occupy the largest space are mere specks in immensity. Concerning the stupendous fact of God's Omnipresence, observe—(1) This fact is agreeable to reason. The denial of it would involve a contradiction. It enters into our very conception of God. A limited God would in truth be no God. (2) This fact is essential to worship. It is essential to the spirit of worship. Worship implies mystery. It is essential to constancy of worship. True worship is not an occasional or specific service confined to times and places, it is an abiding attitude of the soul. "God is a Spirit," etc. (3) This fact is promotive of holiness. Let men realize the constant presence of God, and how strongly will they feel restraint from sin and stimulation to virtue and holiness. (4) This fact is assurative of retribution. Who can hide himself from the Lord? (5) This fact is illustrative of heaven. There is nothing local or formal in the worship of heaven. "I saw no temple in heaven, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." He is felt to be everywhere, and He is worshipped everywhere. 2. Here is a creative Existence. "For all those things hath Mine hand made," etc. Because He made all, He owns all. Creatorship implies Eternity, Sovereignty, Almightiness, and Proprietorship. II. A DOCTRINE THAT TRANSCENDS HUMAN DISCOVERY. "To this man will I look," etc. The doctrine is this,—that this Infinite Being, who is everywhere, who created the universe and owns it, feels a profound interest in the individual man whose soul is in a humble, contrite, and reverent state. Could reason ever have discovered such a truth as this? Never. Although this doctrine transcends reason it does not contradict it. (*Homilist.*) *Living temples for the living God:*—I. GOD'S REJECTION OF ALL MATERIAL TEMPLES. There was a time when it could be said that there was a house of God on earth. That was a time of symbols, when as yet the Church of God was in her childhood. She was being taught her A B C, reading her picture-book, for she could not as yet read the Word of God, as it were in letters. She had need to have pictures put before her, patterns of the heavenly things. Even then, the enlightened amongst the Jews knew well that God did not dwell between curtains, and that it was not possible that He could be encompassed in the most holy place within the veil. It was only a symbol of His presence. But the time of symbols is now passed altogether. In that moment when the Saviour bowed His head, and said "It is finished!" the veil of the temple was rent in twain, so that the mysteries were laid open. So, one reason why God saith He dwelleth not in temples made with hands, is, because He would have us know that the symbolical worship is ended and the reign of the spiritual worship inaugurated at this day (John iv. 21, 23). But our text gives, from God's own mouth, reasons why there can be no house at the present time in which God can dwell; and, indeed, there never was any house of the kind in reality—only in symbol. For, say now, where is the place to build God a house? In heaven? It is only His throne, not His house! On earth? What, on His footstool? Will ye put it where He shall put His foot upon it and crush it? Fly through infinite space, and ye shall not find in any place that God is not there. Time cannot contain Him, though it range along its millenniums! Space cannot hold Him, for He that made all things is greater than all the things that He has made. Yea, all the things that are do not encompass Him. But then, the Lord seems to put it,—What kind of a house (supposing we had a site on which to erect it) would we build God? Sons of men, of what material would ye make a dwelling-place for the Eternal and the Pure? Would ye build of alabaster? The heavens are not clean in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly! Would ye build of gold? Behold, the streets of His metropolitan city are paved therewith, not indeed the dusky gold of earth, but transparent gold, like unto clear glass. And what were gold to Deity? Find diamonds, as massive as the stones whereof Solomon built his house on Zion, and then lay on rubies and jaspers—pile up a house, all of which shall be most precious. What were that to Him? God is a Spirit. He disdaineth your materialism. And yet men think,

forsooth, when they have put up their Gothic or their Grecian structures, "This is God's house." And then the Lord shows that the earth and the heavens themselves, which may be compared to a temple, are the works of His hand. How often I have felt as if I were compassed with the solemn grandeur of a temple, in the midst of the pine forest, or on the heathery hill, or out at night with the bright stars looking down through the deep heavens, or listening to the thunder, peal on peal, or gazing at the lightning as it lit up the sky! Then one feels as if he were in the temple of God! Afar out on the blue sea, where the ship is rocking up and down on the waves' foam—then it seems as if you were somewhere near to God—amidst the sublimities of nature. But what then? All these objects of nature He has made, and they are not a house for Him. II. GOD'S CHOICE OF SPIRITUAL TEMPLES. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." III. THOSE THAT ARE OF THIS CHARACTER SECURE A GREAT BLESSING. God says He will "look" to them. That means several things. 1. Consideration. 2. Approbation. 3. Acceptance. 4. Affection. 5. Benediction. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The greatness and condescension of God:*—That is an excellent answer which was given by a poor man to a sceptic who attempted to ridicule his faith. The scoffer said, "Pray, sir, is your God a great God or a little God?" The poor man replied, "Sir, my God is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; and yet He condescends to be so little, that He dwells in broken and contrite hearts." Oh, the greatness of God, and the condescension of God! (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. **To this man will I look.**—*God's regard for the humble:*—I. THE CHARACTER MENTIONED. II. JEHOVAH'S ATTENTION TO SUCH AN ONE. (*H. Davis.*) *Religious affections attended with humility:*—Those that are destitute of true humility have no true religion. It is the object of the Gospel to produce this effect in the heart. I. LEGAL HUMILITY. This attends the natural workings of the conscience, and the perception of God's greatness, power and terrible majesty. It has in it no virtue; but yet it may be useful as a means to produce what is gracious. II. EVANGELICAL HUMILITY. This arises from a "sense of the transcendent beauty of Divine things in their moral quality," and a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness and odiousness, with an answerable frame of mind. 1. It is the chief part in the doctrine of the Christian duty of self-denial. 2. Many hypocrites profess great humility and are loud in declaring their vileness. Yet, if a minister were to use, as Edwards suggests, the same language to them in private, and should signify that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, they would feel themselves highly injured, and ever after cherish a deep-rooted prejudice against that minister. 3. It is free from the spirit of pride in one's own righteousness, goodness and the like. Some think themselves very humble and make a boast of it. This is spiritual pride. III. SOME APPLICATIONS. 1. True humility is fundamental to the Christian life. 2. It is a bad sign to think we are better Christians than others. 3. If we think "none are so bad as I," then have a care lest you think yourself better than others on this account. 4. Have a care also of self-conceit, lest you think too highly of your humility. 5. Let us think meanly of our attainments in religion and in humility. 6. Blessed are the poor in spirit. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The contrite heart:*—1. Such a spirit is the very essence of the religion of Christ. 2. There is no surer test of the genuineness of one's religious experience. 3. The exceeding value of this spirit in God's sight, and the imperative duty of cultivating it, are too much lost sight of in this age of the world. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Poor and contrite spirits the objects of Divine favour:*—I. THE POOR MAN. This does not principally refer to those that are poor in this world: for though it be very common that "the poor of this world are chosen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," yet this is not an universal rule. The "poor" here signifies such as Christ characterizes more fully by "the poor in spirit" (Matt. v. 3). And this character implies the following ingredients. (1) The poor man to whom Jehovah looks is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of God can make him happy (Ps. iv. 6, 7; lxxiii. 25, 26; xviii. 15). (2) This spiritual poverty implies deep humility and self-abasement. (3) He who is poor in spirit is sensible of his need of the influences of Divine grace to sanctify and enrich him. (4) He is deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ for his justification. (5) He is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace. II. CONTRITION OF SPIRIT. The word "contrite" signifies one that is beaten or bruised with hard blows, or a heavy burden. And it belongs to the mourning penitent whose heart is broken and wounded for sin. Sin is an

intolerable burden that crushes and bruises him, and he feels himself pained and sore under it. III. Consider the remaining character of the happy man to whom the Lord will look: "HIM THAT TREMBLETH AT MY WORD." This character implies a tender sense of the great things of the Word, and a heart easily impressed with them as the most important realities. This was remarkably exemplified in the tender-hearted Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 19–28). The threatenings of the Word do not appear vain terms, nor great swelling words of vanity, but the most tremendous realities. Such an one cannot bear up under them, but would tremble, and fall, and die away, if not relieved by some happy promise of deliverance. (*S. Davies, M.A.*) *God's look towards the humble:*—1. He looks upon you with acceptance. 2. He looks to you so as to take particular notice of you. He sees all the workings of your hearts towards Him. 3. He looks to you so as to look after you, as we do after the sick and weak (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). (*Ibid.*) *Humility essential to success in prayer:*—The "Times" once, in recording petitions presented to the House of Lords, mentioned one which was rejected on account of an omission—the word "humble" was left out. How many petitions to a higher tribunal must be rejected for lack of humility in the hearts of those presenting them! (*Free Methodist.*) *The humility of Godliness:*—In the evening of the morning that Gordon, when in Palestine, received a telegram from England, asking him to undertake a mission which he had all his life longed to undertake, he was found outside the city wall, kneeling in prayer. When remonstrated with on account of the place being dangerous from Arabs, he replied, "The telegrams from England this morning filled me with such elation, I felt I might get into trouble by being proud, and I thought I would just get upon my horse and go away by myself and humble myself before God." (*Sunday School Chronicle.*) **And trembleth at My word.**—*Trembling at the word of the Lord:*—I. WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE THAT TREMBLE AT GOD'S WORD. 1. Who they are not. (1) They are not a proud people: they do not cry, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" (2) They are not a profane people: they neither make a mock at sin nor at God's word. (3) They are not indifferent people. (4) They are not a critical, sceptical people. (5) They are not presumptuous people, who derive fictitious comfort from it. 2. Who they are. (1) They are people who do believe that there is a Word of God. (2) They are acquainted with God's Word. II. WHY DO THEY TREMBLE? 1. Because of His exceeding majesty. 2. Because of the searching power of God's Word. 3. They tremble at the word when it is in the form of threatening. 4. They tremble with fear lest they should break God's law. 5. They tremble lest they should miss the promises when they are spread out before them. We hear of some who "could not enter in because of unbelief;" and we are taken with trembling lest we should be like them. III. WHAT DOES GOD COMPARE THEM TO? To a temple (vers. 1, 2). He prefers us to the temple; and, further, He prefers us even to the great temple of the universe, not made with human hands, which He Himself sets so much above the house that Solomon built. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Trembling at God's Word:*—What meaneth this trembling? It does not mean a slavish fear. They that tremble at God's Word at the first may do so, because the word threatens them with death. But afterwards as they advance, and become familiar with the God of love, and enter into the secret of His covenant, they tremble for a very different reason. They tremble because they have a holy reverence of God, and consequently of that Word in which resides so much of the power and majesty of the Most High. (*Ibid.*) *Trembling at God's Word:*—It was our privilege once to witness a very curious experiment by a scientific lecturer on the effects of musical sounds. The lecturer showed a disc of thin glass, delicately poised on a suitable apparatus. On this disc was spread a thin layer of very fine dust. A musical note was sounded underneath the disc, and the waves of sound caused the glass to vibrate, which again caused the fine dust on its surface to tremble and form itself into every conceivable shape of exquisite beauty, much after the manner of frost on the window pane. Thus, we presume, it is with the "poor" of the text, the dust of God's footstool. The musical note of hope will cause them to vibrate and tremble and throb into the various forms of reverence, hope, joy, and gratitude. It implies precisely a similar attitude to that manifested on the memorable day of Pentecost. Here we have the multitude as "the dust of the balance," and Peter, the Gospel experimentalist, sounding the musical note of Gospel hope, and behold! how the dust trembles and vibrates into such forms of spiritual beauty as faith and hope and gratitude and obedience. (*A. J. Parry.*)

Ver. 3. He that killeth an ox.—*Worship and wickedness:*—Our prophet affirms,

that the sacrifices offered by the wicked and hypocritical among the Jews, being attended with enormous crimes and profane rites, and not presented with pure hearts, according to the Divine appointment, were an abomination to the Lord. They intermixed impious ceremonies and odious superstitions with the sacrifices which they offered to the Most High. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Hateful sacrifices:*—The first part of the verse runs literally thus: "The slaughterer of the ox, a slayer of a man; the sacrificer of the sheep, a breaker of a dog's neck; the offerer of an oblation, swine's blood; the maker of a memorial of incense, one that blesseth vanity (*i.e.* an idol);" four legitimate sacrificial acts being bracketed with four detestable idolatrous rites. The first member of each pair is probably to be taken as subject, the second as predicate, of a sentence. But this leaves open a choice between two interpretations. 1. That the legal sacrificial action is as hateful in the sight of God as the idolatrous rite, so long as it is performed by unspiritual worshippers. 2. That he who does the first series of actions does also the second, *i.e.* combines the service of Jehovah with the most hateful idolatries. It is extremely difficult to decide which is the true sense. The words "as if" in E. V. are, of course, supplied by the translators, but the rendering is a perfectly fair one. The one fact that favours the second explanation is that the latter part of the verse speaks of those who "delight in their abominations." Unless there be a complete break in the middle of the verse, which is unlikely, this would seem to imply that the abominations enumerated were actually practised by certain persons, who at the same time claimed to be worshippers of Jehovah (cf. ver. 17, chaps. lxv. 3–5, lvii. 3–9). (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *Unacceptable sacrifices:*—I regard Vitringa's exposition as the most exact, profound and satisfactory. He agrees with Gesenius in making the text the general doctrine that sacrifice is hateful in the sight of God if offered in a wicked spirit, but with a special reference to those who still adhered to the old sacrifices after the great Sacrifice for sin was come and had been offered once for all. Thus understood, this verse extends to sacrifices that which the foregoing verse said of the temple, after the change of dispensation. (*J. A. Alexander.*) "*As if he slew a man*":—The reference may be either to murder merely or to human sacrifice; most probably the latter, since every other member of the sentence expresses a religious act. That human sacrifice was actually perpetrated by those spoken of may be safely inferred from chap. lvii. 5. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) "*As if he cut off* (*breaketh*) *a dog's neck*":—This sacrifice . . . seems . . . to be alluded to as a Punic rite in Justin xviii. I. 10, where we read that Darius sent a message to the Carthaginians forbidding them to sacrifice human victims and to eat the flesh of dogs. In the connection a religious meal must be understood. (*W. Robertson Smith.*) *Formal worship:*—I. ITS FEATURES. II. ITS OFFENSIVENESS TO GOD. III. ITS UTTER WORTHLESSNESS. (*Homiletic Commentary.*)

Ver. 4. **I also will choose their delusions.**—*Sin and penalty:*—I. THE OFFENCE. Impenitence, aggravated transgression, wilful contempt. II. THE PUNISHMENT. Delusion, fear, ruin. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **Hear the word of the Lord.**—*A godly minority:*—From the majority of the whole body, godless and heathen in character, the prophet now turns to the minority, who tremble with reverence when they hear God's word. Let them hear how Jehovah will help them against their persecutors. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Hatred of the godly:*—They who hate them are their own brethren and, what aggravates the sin still more, Jehovah's name is the ground (cf. Luke xxi. 12) on which they are hated by them. (*Ibid.*) "*Let the Lord be glorified*":—"Be glorified" means, Show His glory. They speak in incredulous mockery. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Acceptable worship:*—I. THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTER OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIPPERS. They "tremble at His word." This fear arises from—1. Their tender love and reverence for the Author of the Word. 2. A settled delight in the holiness of that Word. 3. Produced alike by the terror of the threatenings and the sweetness of the promises. II. THE SPIRITUAL REGARD WHICH GOD PAYS TO THEM. 1. He looks upon them. 2. He dwells with them. 3. He vindicates their cause from the rebuke of enemies. 4. He brings them for ever to dwell with Him. (*S. Thodey.*)

Ver. 6. **A voice of noise from the city.**—*Social degeneracy, national apostasy, and the voice of God:*—It is well for us to look around upon the things that are done in the midst of us as a people; well, because we must give no connivance at evil

thinking or teaching or doing; well, because we must be careful about ourselves; well, because we must be truthful towards our neighbours; well, because we must be faithful toward our God. This text suggests three different voices which thoughtful men should hear: "A voice of noise from the city," etc. In other words, our ear must listen to the state of society and the state of religion amongst us, and then consider what the Lord has to say concerning both. 1. What is the voice which comes from the city, from the secular pursuits, the social habits, the business transactions, the political doings of men? There is a voice of noise, as of men that laugh, as of men that strive, as of men that boast. Luxury, with all its attendant evils, has come up as a cry from all our land, into the ears of earnest and anxious men, who know how foolish it is to be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." It has carried with it a hasting to be rich; and out of that has grown a covetousness, a cold system of reckless speculation, a hard system of indifference, to the ruin of many for the enrichment of a few, which have made our age and our country a by-word amongst men. What awful accounts of utter contempt for human sufferings! What sad chronicles of entire forgetfulness of human wrongs have become the familiar subjects of every-day knowledge amongst us! These are crying evils in our days; the voice of noises from the city, symptoms of our social life, of which all true patriots ought to be blushingly ashamed. Yet, over the moanings of the oppressed, and the sorrows of the forsaken, the roar still rises. I ask every pious parent to keep a jealous and watchful eye upon the children growing in their simplicity at home, and to protect them against the strange fascination which has come over the land. I call upon all true servants of Christ to come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. The Lord's people should be often with their God, seeking protection against the prevailing current of evil in men's hearts, minds, and ways. Expect no sympathy, because everything seems to say that faithful men must suffer for their faithfulness in the evil day. Fall back upon the right, the true, the good, the pure; fall back upon the oath and covenant and power and promise of God; but make no compromise with Satan. 2. But the prophet heard a voice out of the temple, and so may we. The luxury of the nation has had its influence upon the nation's faith. Men who will not shape their conduct by God's law will soon find means of accommodating their creed to their conduct. The pure Gospel is too plain-spoken for the consciences of men who desire to quarrel with God rather than with themselves. What is the voice from the temple in this our day? The great feature is a real indifference, not an avowed unbelief, not a bold blasphemy, not a studied contempt, not an entire ignoring of religious things, but a real indifference. There is an evil spirit abroad which takes to itself the blessed name of charity. It has always an excuse for evil, but it has little patience with truth. It has no strong convictions and no real love. There is a voice to be heard from the temple which may well make thoughtful people tremble. Men are falling again to their old and mischievous work of tampering with God's Word. Multitudes, it is to be feared, have lost their reverence, if not their faith. 3. This brings me to the third voice, which the prophet heard in the days of Israel's decline and fall: "A voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to His enemies." In the written Word we have warning about evil time. (1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1.) The voice of God is against all such evil (2 Tim. iv. 1–4). "The voice of Him that rendereth recompense unto His enemies is, Woe unto you." What, then, should God's servants do? The voice from the city suggests that they must make their healthy influence felt in social life by a solemn and sacred protest against things which frivolize, secularize, materialize men's minds and ways. The voice from the temple suggests that all who love the pure Gospel truth must search it out so as to boldly set it forth, stand by it, speak for it, identify themselves with its honour, its advance, its defence. And the voice of the avenging God suggests that all who know Him should humble themselves before Him, and plead with Him that He would have mercy. (*J. Richardson, M.A.*)

Vers. 7–9. **Before she travailed, she brought forth.**—*The new Israel:*—The predictive message of our prophet is now so far advanced that the future promised is at the door; the Church of the future is already like a child ripe for birth, and about to separate from the womb of Zion hitherto barren. The God, who has already prepared everything so far, will suddenly make Zion a mother; a man-child, *i. e.* a whole nation after Jehovah's heart, will suddenly lie in her lap; and this new-born Israel, not the corrupt mass, will build Jehovah a Temple. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The birth of the Gentile Church:*—It is perfectly sufficient to understand the parturition

as a figure for the whole eventful crisis of the change of dispensations, and the consequent change in the condition of the Church. This indestructible ideal person, when she might have seemed to be reduced to nothing by the defection of the natural Israel, is vastly and suddenly augmented by the introduction of the Gentiles, a succession of events which is here most appropriately represented as the birth of a male child without the pains of child-birth. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *The birth of the Christian Church:*—The children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb (Ps. cx. 3). (*M. Henry.*)

Ver. 8. **Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?**—*The acceleration of God's movements:*—We are taught that in these latter days God is to shorten normal processes, accelerate events, and so "make a short work in righteousness." I. THE TRUTH OF GOD HAS WEIGHT, THEREFORE MOMENTUM. II. THIS INHERENT MOMENTUM INCREASES WITH THE PROGRESS OF GOD'S TRUTH, IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL LAW OF FORCES. III. GOD IS BEGINNING TO GIVE IT NOW AN ADDED CELERITY. (*E. W. Thwing, M.D.*) **As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.**—*Travailing for souls:*—I. THERE MUST BE TRAVAIL BEFORE THERE WILL BE SPIRITUAL BIRTH. 1. Let me, first, establish this fact from history. Before there has fallen a great benediction upon God's people, it has been preceded by great searchings of heart. Israel was so oppressed in Egypt, that it would have been a very easy, and almost a natural thing for the people to become so utterly crushed in spirit as to submit to be hereditary bondslaves, making the best they could of their miserable lot: but God would not have it so; He meant to bring them out "with a high hand and an outstretched arm." Before, however, He began to work He made them begin to cry. Let us take a long leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. But David was the subject of spiritual throes and pangs of the most intense kind. What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion, and make the vine which He had planted to flourish once again. Now, David was only the mouth of hundreds of others, who with equal fervency cried unto God that the blessing might rest upon His people. Remember also the days of Josiah, the king. The book of the law was found neglected in the temple, and when it was brought before the king, he rent his clothes, for he saw that the nation had revolted, and that wrath must come upon it to the uttermost. The young king's heart, which was tender, for he feared God, was ready to break with anguish to think of the misery that would come upon his people on account of their sins. Then there came a glorious reformation, which purged the land of idols, and caused the passover to be observed as never before. Travail of heart among the godly produced the delightful change. It was the same with the work of Nehemiah. In the early dawn of Christian history, there was a preparation of the Church before it received an increase. The like living zeal and vehement desire have always been perceptible in the Church of God before any season of refreshing. Think not that Luther was the only man that wrought the Reformation. There were hundreds who sighed and cried in secret. And this, while true on the large scale, is true also in every individual case. As a rule, those who bring souls to Christ are those who first of all have felt an agony of desire that souls should be saved. This is imaged to us in our Master's character. His ministering servants who have been most useful have always been eagerly desirous to be so. 2. The reasons for it. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? It might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil. As it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual; there shall not come the blessing we seek, without first of all the earnest yearning for it. It is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat no sweet," "No pains no gains," "No mill no meal." But better still, He has ordained this for our good. Every grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. Besides, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire. The Holy Ghost usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts. Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the offspring. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion? The Church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them. Once more, there is great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth, because it secures all the glory to God. Your

longing that others should be saved, and your vehemence of spirit, shall secure to God all the glory of His own work. 3. Notice how this travail shows itself. Usually when God intends greatly to bless a Church, it will begin in this way: Two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the Church revived rules them. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners; they travail in birth for souls. By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer-meetings become very different. Meanwhile, not with the preacher only will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people; another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles, who come only now and then. One brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the Gospel at the corner of the street; another will open a room down a dark court; another will visit lodging-houses and hospitals: all sorts of holy plans will be invented, and zeal will break out in many directions. All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. II. THE RESULT IS OFTEN VERY SURPRISING. 1. Frequently for rapidity. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." During the ten years which ended in 1870 such wondrous changes were wrought throughout the world that no prophet would have been believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which, according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at least one hundred years. 2. For the greatness of it. It is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" for as soon as ever Zion was in distress about her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and re-established the fallen state. So in answer to prayer, God does not only give speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room "before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thousand were ready to confess their faith in Christ, and to be baptized. III. THIS TRAVAIL AND ITS RESULT ARE ABUNDANTLY DESIRABLE. There is no hope for China, for the world, for our own city, while the Church is lethargic. It is through the Church the blessing is bestowed. Besides this, when a Church is not serving God, mischief is brewing within herself. The Church must either bring forth children unto God, or die of consumption: she has no alternative but that. A Church must either be fruitful or rot, and of all things a rotting Church is the most offensive. And then, worst of all, God is not glorified. IV. THE WOE WHICH WILL SURELY COME TO THOSE WHO HINDER THE TRAVAIL OF THE CHURCH, and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent. What said the heroine of old who had gone forth against the enemies of Israel, when she remembered coward spirits? "Curse ye, Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, against the mighty." Some such curse will assuredly come upon every professing Christian who is backward in helping the Church in the day of her soul's travail. Who are they that hinder her? Every worldly Christian hinders the progress of the Gospel. They are also guilty who distract the mind of the Church from the subject in hand. Above all, we shall be hindering the travail of the Church if we do not share in it. Many Church-members think that if they do nothing wrong, and make no trouble, then they are all right. Not at all. V. I shall close with A WORD OF BLESSING. There shall come a great blessing to any who feel the soul travail that brings souls to God. Your own heart will be watered. Moreover, will it not be a joy to feel that you have done what you could? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. Rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.—*A dirge for the down-grade, and a song for faith:*—A mourner is always an interesting person. The highest style of mourner is one whose griefs are neither selfish nor grovelling. He who bears spiritual sorrow on account of others is of a nobler order than the man who laments his personal woes. The most excellent style of mourner is the mourner in Zion, the mourner for Zion, the mourner with Zion. I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT MOURN WITH JERUSALEM? Those that love the Church of God, and desire her prosperity; and when they do not see that prosperity, are depressed in spirit. 1. Nothing can make the heart of the people of God more heavy than to think that the Gospel glory of the Church is declining. 2. Another cause of mourning is when we see the holiness of the visible Church beclouded. 3. Moreover, we see her sacred

ardour is cooling. 4. There is grave cause of mourning in Zion because the services of God's house are neglected. 5. Another very grave cause for mourning to all true Christians is the multitude of sinners that remain unsaved. II. WE MAY YET REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM. 1. When we remember that God has not changed, either in nature or in love to His people, or in the purpose of His grace. 2. We may expect the Lord to appear. "He shall appear to your joy," etc. (ver. 5.) 3. When the Lord shall put on strength, then shall His Church be aroused. 4. Then shall the Church have many converts. 5. Then shall she nourish them well. 6. At such times there is an abundant degree of peace and joy in all believing hearts (ver. 12). 7. God will raise up men fitted to do His work (ver. 21). III. WHY SHOULD WE PERSONALLY BE OF THE NUMBER THAT MOURN WITH THE CHURCH, AND THAT REJOICE WITH HER? 1. There is our own sin and ruin to mourn over. 2. We might wisely become mourners when we think of our own want of zeal. 3. May we not add to this our own failures in the matter of holiness? 4. We have all a great concern in this matter, and we ought, therefore, to join with the Church in all her griefs. If the ministry of our pastors be not successful, we shall lose by its want of power. If the Gospel is not preached our souls will not be fed. Suppose the Gospel is not preached with saving power, then we shall have our children unconverted, and they will not be our joy and crown. There cannot be a deficiency in the pulpit without its bringing mischief to our households. We are members of one body, and if any part of the body suffers, every other part of the body will have to suffer too. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river.—*The Church in peace and prosperity:*—The members of the Church can then revel in peace and wealth, like a child on its mother's breast; the world belongs entirely to the Church, for the Church belongs entirely to God. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The peace of the river:*—The illustrations which Grace borrows from Nature are strikingly appropriate. The history of this appropriateness is that Nature and Grace proceed from one and the same Hand, are children of one and the same Parent. You have in the text two objects compared and put side by side—the peace of God's Church and a river. The quietness of a river is perhaps the most obvious ground of the comparison. The peace of God's Church resembles a river—I. IN ITS SOURCE. The source of a river is hidden. It wells up from the fountains of the great deep beneath the earth. And even the spot where it first rises is often inaccessible, being situated in the heart of tangled brushwood, or beneath the perilous vault of an ice-cave. The source of peace to God's children is God Himself. And God is a God who hides Himself—a God who is apprehended only by those into whose hearts the light of the glorious Gospel has shined. And the spot, too, whence the peace of God's children takes its rise lies not open to the scrutiny of man's eye, or the passage of man's footstep. That spot is the heart, the inmost spirit. Accordingly, men can see that peace only in its effects. And there is yet another sense in which the source of the Christian peace is hidden. The events, the great historical facts, which lie at the root of it—the means by which God ministers it—are by-gone and accomplished. The great central facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus are now, if I may say so, buried and out of sight, and centuries are piled upon them, like rocks and icebergs on the spot where some mighty river takes its rise. But these events, nevertheless, are God's instruments, whereby He exerts a mighty influence on many a heart even at the present day. II. IN THE METHOD OF ITS NOURISHMENT. It is true that rivers are fed perpetually by their springs. But an external nourishment is also supplied to them by occasional rains and landfloods. The river of the Christian's peace—I do not say flows from, but is augmented by contrition. Strange paradox this, that what seems to destroy peace should promote it! But so it is. III. IN ITS COURSE. 1. A river in its course is quietly progressive. Its quietness is not the quietness of stagnation, but of advancement. The Christian's peace is a peace of progress in grace. It is not a peace which leaves him where it found him, but a peace which bears him on silently towards the bosom of his God. 2. It is exceeding deep. And the peace of God is said to "pass all understanding." This may be understood in two ways. The nature and character of this peace is unintelligible to those who have not tasted it, and by those who have tasted it its depth is unfathomable. 3. It is fertilizing and enriching. The country smiles with plenty along its banks. It is also the great medium of commerce and traffic, whereby men are made rich and their estate and substance is increased. It is a means of communication for those who live on its margin with the ocean and with one another. The peace of God is at

the root of all holy fruitfulness. Many people accept the truth that "the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever," while they discard the truth—equally important and Scriptural—that peace is the root, as well as the fruit of righteousness, and that the Lord Jesus Christ promises to give rest to the weary and heavy laden, before they can and in order that they may, submit themselves to His yoke. At the root of the Christian's love is peace—at the root of his joy is peace—at the root of his long-suffering, gentleness and goodness is peace—at the root of his meekness and temperance is peace. Peace it is which, like the broad bosom of a fair river, quietly undulates along and ministers nourishment to the roots of all these graces, nor is it possible that the leaf of any of them should be green, were the streams of this river diverted another way. This peace is enriching as well as fertilizing, because it opens into the ocean; it is the medium of communicating with God and with the saints of God. It is on the broad bosom of this peace—even because it is through Jesus Christ alone that our prayers float towards our heavenly Father. And I need not tell you what a peculiarly rich traffic is the traffic with heaven. Then, again, this peace of God is enriching, in that it is a medium of communication between us and those who have obtained like precious faith with ourselves. It is a pleasant river, on whose margin both I and my brother dwell—and which conveys from me to him sympathies, and prayers, and outgoings of the heart, and brings back the same from him to me. And when my prayers and missives are sent forth on their way towards heaven, my brother's meet and join them—and both perform the voyage side by side—and no sooner shall both return than he shall send me notice of the treasure he hath acquired, and demand on his part an account of mine. Such is in a figure that doctrine which we profess, when we say "I believe in the communion of saints." 4. It is clean and cleansing. And we need not to be told that the peace of God's Church is a clean and holy (because a living) peace—clear as crystal and perfectly alien from all defilement. The slightest allowed filthiness of flesh or spirit is abhorrent to the nature of this peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." And as this peace is clean, so also it makes clean. As soon as it enters into the conscience, it cleanses it. 5. It bears burdens. Barges and ships of many tons' weight float on its bosom down to the ocean. It is one of the most delightful characteristics of the Christian's peace that its buoyancy supports many and grievous burdens. Into God's bosom they are carried in the exercise of confession and faithful repentance; in His breast they must be lodged, if we desire them to be finally obliterated and annulled. But surely, if it were not for His peace within, we could neither have courage to lodge them there, nor strength to support the burden of them ourselves. IV. AT ITS MOUTH. It expands. For the last few miles of its progress, the distance between its banks becomes wider, till at length it pours itself with a full flood into the ocean. So it is as a matter of fact in the Christian's experience. The peace of the true believer is enlarged as he draws near to the heavenly goal, and accordingly the country of his soul is more abundantly fertilized. Who shall say how wide its flood may not extend, when it pours itself into His bosom in eternity, from whom it issued forth in time? (*Dean Goulburn, D.C.L.*)

Ver. 13. **As one whom his mother comforteth.**—*Isaiah's figure of motherhood* (vers. 7–13):—The prophet reawakens the figure, that is ever nearest his heart, of motherhood—children suckled, borne and cradled in the lap of their mother fill all his view; nay, finer still, the grown man coming back with wounds and weariness upon him to be comforted of his mother. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *The exiles' home in Jerusalem:*—Israel then will be like a man returned from foreign soil, escaped from captivity, full of sad remembrances, whose echoes, however, completely vanish in the mother-arms of Divine love in Jerusalem, the beloved home that was the home of their thoughts even on foreign soil. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *The Motherhood of God:*—God is Creator, Preserver, Father, but something more. I. A good mother has a wonderful fund of SYMPATHY; so has God. II. Motherhood is wonderful in its CONSTANCY; so is God. III. Motherhood is GRIEVED OVER SIN; so is God. IV. A mother's love is often REDEMPTIVE; God's love is redemptive ten thousand times more. (*D. J. Rounsefell.*) *Divine comfort most endearing and efficient:*—God will comfort His people—1. With all the affection and solicitude of a mother. See the mother how she loves, strives, labours, suffers, and sacrifices for her child. 2. With all the long-suffering and forbearance of a mother. 3. With all the forgiveness and consolation of a mother. How ready to forgive her erring, wandering child—and ready to console in trouble. 4. With all the instruction and correction of a mother.

God teaches in various ways, and whom He loveth He chasteneth. 5. With all the constancy of a mother. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) *Divine consolation:*—I. THE CONSOLATION PROMISED. "I will comfort you." It is the character of Divine promises that they apply to real cases: they meet the condition and circumstances of man. Are we ignorant? "I will instruct thee." Are we weak? "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee." Are we in danger? "I will deliver thee." Are we disconsolate? "I will comfort you." The discouragements of life are many, trials are various: the fears to which we are subject, and the sins which easily beset us, who can number? These all impair our comfort, and have a natural tendency to sink us in despondency. But the Gospel provides a cordial. 1. This consolation is Divine in its origin. It springs not from creatures, not from earthly good, or from carnal gratifications. The Most High claims the prerogative as His own. 2. It is rational in its nature; not consolation visionary and enthusiastic, but intelligent, consistent with reason as well as according to faith. 3. Free in its bestowment. 4. It is select in its subjects. All are not partakers of heavenly consolation, for all are not qualified to enjoy it. Penitence of disposition is requisite: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Earnest desire also is implied; for who can be supposed to possess Divine comfort who are indifferent about it, who are living without prayer, or whose petitions are languid and lifeless? "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Holy watchfulness is likewise supposed; for whoever is careless and slothful must be deceived if he imagine himself to be comforted of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is "the Comforter," but "grieve" Him not; otherwise He withdraws His influence, and all is darkness or delusion. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH CONSOLATION IS AFFORDED. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." A stranger may administer comfort, but it is in a distant way; a friend may console us, and this with kindness; a father also, with tenderness still more impressive; but none comforts like a mother. 1. The affection of a mother is warm; she loves her child, loves it as part of herself. 2. The care of a mother is indulgent. 3. The condescension and self-denial of a mother are not small. 4. The assiduity of a mother is unwearied. III. THE MEANS BY WHICH CONSOLATION IS ENJOYED. "Ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." The pious Jews were comforted when in Babylon, and during their dispersion among the nations; but their comfort in such circumstances was attended with much affliction: it was when returned to Jerusalem, when resettled in their own country, and among their own people, that their enjoyment rose the highest, and was most regular. This teaches—1. The importance of separation from an ensnaring world. 2. The propriety of regular attendance on religious worship. It was a high privilege to dwell in Jerusalem, because of attendance on religious worship. 3. The duty of Church-membership. Jerusalem was not only the seat of Divine worship, but an emblem of the Christian Church, and they who constitute this Church are particularly authorized to plead the promise of the text, "You shall be comforted in Jerusalem." 4. It suggests the worth of a right spirit in attending Christian ordinances. The form of godliness is nothing. (*Anon.*) *The Motherhood of God:*—Readers of such writers as Theodore Parker, Frances Power Cobbe, and Chunder Sen must often have been struck with the frequency with which these theists address invocations or prayers to God as the Father and Mother of our spirits. Why should they not? There are surely as valid reasons for our thinking and speaking of God as our Perfect Mother as there are for claiming Him as the Perfect Father of us all. 1. Even if there were no hint or simile to this effect in the Scriptures we should still find it necessary to predicate it of God in order to perfect our conceptions of Him. What these conceptions are will best be understood by a disclosure of their basis. To our thinking, the ultimate source of our knowledge of God is the intuitions of the human heart. The instincts, the qualities, the affections in human nature (though these are at a very great remove from those in God) are the truest indications and interpretations to us of what God is; if the revelation recorded in the Bible be the light (as it undoubtedly is), these things in us are the eye to which that light appeals and by which we see; in fact, if we cannot argue from our own spiritual natures up to God's, then, all metaphysical reasoning and the Christian Scriptures notwithstanding, we have no reliable knowledge of God, faith is presumptuous, worship delusive, and the ground of personal responsibility crumbles away from under our feet. Further, a philosophical interpretation of the person of the Christ, as well as the Scriptural declaration that man is made in the image of God, warrants the assertion that in a very true sense one of the worthiest conceptions of the Divine nature is that of a fully developed, completely perfected, human nature. On this ground we believe we are justified in regarding

God as our Father; or, to put conversely what this implies, we do right in assuming the fatherly elements in men to be the best index or guarantee of what God is. But whilst the Fatherhood of God is the perfection of our human nature, so far as man is concerned, it is not the crown of our humanity in its totality, that is to say, so far as human nature includes womanhood as well as manhood. God, in the very nature of the case, must gather up in Himself all the essential qualities of the mother no less than of the father. That this is so, is in a measure evidenced by the facts of our human experience. Take, for example, the evidence deducible from the case of a family where the children have been deprived of either parent, say the mother; in this instance, not only do the boys lose the beneficial effect of the softening and refining atmosphere of their mother's presence, but the girls also, however wise and fond their father may be, become prudish and unnaturally grave. In like manner, if the children are left fatherless, both sons and daughters suffer from the loss of their father's sobering, restraining influence, while the daughters especially miss the strengthening force derivable from acquaintance with his life and character. Yes, that child only is rightly trained and fully educated who has had the good fortune to know both the gentler sway of a mother's and the severer rule of a father's nature. We see, then, that in actual life only that parentage is normally complete which is the blending of the two complementing sides, the fatherly and the motherly. And since of necessity the ideal in heaven cannot be less perfect than the actual on earth, and since, moreover, God is the source whence all the phases of our humanity have sprung, we may reverently address God in our prayers as being both the Perfect Father and Mother in whom we confide. 2. Nor is this idea of the Divine Motherhood as unserviceable as at first sight it may seem. It may be urged as affording one practical way of escape from the beautiful but blinding web, so to say, which the thoughts of many are busily weaving. It not unfrequently occurs that men, whose scientific tastes or pursuits change rather than destroy their hold on religion, find their thoughts of nature, life, and God taking a purely pantheistic colouring. To highly imaginative minds, to devout poetic temperaments, this habit of deifying everything is not a little fascinating. If God be thought of as He who is nature itself, then the more sensuous sides of our being will be appealed to and quickened, we grant, as will our intellectual needs in many respects be met and fostered. But the deep hunger and thirst of our more human natures will be unappeased, the more spiritual and practical cravings of our personal life will be slighted and wronged. For how little will such a pantheistic faith, beautiful as it is, and true in part though it be, serve and console the heart when it is beset with agonizing doubt or disheartened by the strength and shame of its sin, or well-nigh crushed by a fatalistic sense of the hard, merciless rule of the inevitable! Nature in some of her moods is anything but pitiful. Besides, what does a religion of this kind avail for those who have not been endowed with a lively imagination, or with poetic insight, or with mental vigour; what will or can it mean to those whose ideas and impressions of life are chiefly toned and tempered by poverty or pain or thankless toil, or misery or crime? With such an abstract God as this, we shall feel ourselves before long like to one wearied, oppressed with all the *recherché* elegance of a palace, and yearning for the real and simple comfort of a home. See now the remedy the truth under discussion affords. Let it be granted that God is the sum total of all the beauty and order, and music and life of the universe, but then surely He is more than this. He is the source and crown of all the human affections that have scattered themselves like so many sun's rays throughout the fatherhoods and motherhoods, and childhoods and friendships of the world. These intensely real elements in our experience must have a living background in God from whom all things issue. "He that made the ear, shall He not hear; He that made the eye shall He not see?" and shall not He who bestowed on us so personal and potent a divinity as our mother, "the holiest thing on earth," be Himself equally personal and motherly? (*J. T. Stannard.*) *Divine comfort*:—I. A DIRE NECESSITY. Comfort. II. A DEPLORABLE INCAPACITY.—We are helpless as babes. III. AN ABSOLUTE IGNORANCE. A babe does not know its griefs. It can only realize a sense of discomfort. Its complaints are often unmeaning, foolish, needless. In this way many of us live and die. IV. A CONSIDERATE COMFORTER. What a charm there is in the mother's voice! So in the Divine voice of the Holy Spirit He comforts—1. With the solicitude of a mother. How a mother loves, strives, labours, and sacrifices for her child. 2. With the forgiveness and consolation of a mother. 3. With the instruction and correction of a mother. A good and wise mother will instruct and correct. 4. With the constancy of a mother (chap. xlix. 14, 15).

God loves to the end. V. AN IMPORTANT MEANS. "Ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." The promise is not without limitations. This expression means that the consolations of God come to those who are in His Church, who are in Christ Jesus. This is the place for us to rest in. 1. It is the place which He has appointed. 2. The place where He delights to dwell. 3. The place where His spirit is poured out. 4. The place where, by our own acts of devotion and hearing, we derive peace and rest. (*Homilist.*) *The Divine Motherhood*:—Is not the highest use of human relationships to reveal God? Are not the genuine king, judge, friend, father, so many mirrors in which the Divine character is, in some degree, reflected? And if this be true of all other human relationships, especially of those most natural and elemental, is it not emphatically thus in the unique, peerless one of mother? Indeed, since there is need of all human relationships combined to reveal God, it is most clear that this one cannot be omitted. And if even idolaters have ever felt they must select the best material at their command to adumbrate the deity they worship, we may surely lay our hands on this highest thing we call motherhood, to illustrate something of the attributes and the ways of "our own God." His love transcends all motherhood. It is a relationship marked by—I. CLOSEST INTIMACY. The child's life, especially at its beginning, is a part of its mother's life. Supported by maternal sustenance, watched by maternal wisdom, embosomed in maternal love, the child has more from its mother, and owes more to her, than science can analyze or poetry describe. Thus intimate is God's relationship to us. "We are His offspring." II. INTENSE INDIVIDUALISM. In two aspects there is an individualizing element and habit in motherhood that is on the very surface of the relationship, and that yet is one of its profoundest realities. 1. The mother individualizes her child. So both the Old and New Testament revelation, and indeed all His dealings with us, discover how individual all men are to God. 2. Then, the child individualizes its mother. "Our own God." III. UNWEARIEDNESS OF CARE. The devotion of a mother is not that of hours, but of days—not of days only, but of nights also. It is not exhausted when its object has passed through infancy, but is active and anxious over its youth; yearns fondly, even when it can accomplish little, over its manhood or womanhood; lives and reigns in the heart till the mother herself dies; and—who can tell?—perhaps may still watch and guide and bless from the world of spirits. All human history gives emphasis to the question, "Can a woman forget her child?" Others may degrade and desecrate the meaning of the word "love," by saying profanely, "I loved once." The mothers of the world are the monuments of the perpetuity—one had almost said, of the eternity—of love. Yet the highest authority says, they may forget, yet will not God. IV. SACRIFICIALNESS OF LOVE. Probably all true love is sacrificial. Anyway, it is beyond contradiction that a mother's love is. Conclusion: 1. Lessons for parents. (1) Here is a word of instruction for those who, whether as fathers or mothers, are not fulfilling the highest duty of their relationship, namely, revealing God to their children. (2) Here is a word of consolation. Motherhood means a life of sacrificial, often unhonoured, often unrequited love. But what if that love is revealing God? What if it is fulfilling some of the functions of the Cross at Calvary? Is any endurance too heavy, any toil too irksome, any anguish too keen, if thereby God's heart is unveiled as it never otherwise could have been? 2. Remonstrance with sinners. The most heinous sins are sins against love. All transgression against this God of Divine motherliness, is such sin. It is folly to rebel against the God of all wisdom; the rebellion will ultimately be thwarted. It is madness to rebel against the God of all power: He must reign till His enemies be made His footstool. But it is darkest sin to rebel against "the God of all comfort." (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*) *God comforting as a mother*:—1. God comforts like the ideal mother. The only perfect mother is in the mind and heart of God. And He comforts as that image might be expected to comfort and would be capable of comforting. 2. God comforts as the mothers comforted of whom the prophet spoke. No mother is perfect, but every true and good mother is a great consoler. God comforts. (1) Naturally. (2) Personally. (3) Lovingly. (4) Practically. (5) Broadly. (6) Constantly. (7) Effectually. (*S. Martin.*) *God our Mother*:—The Bible is a warm letter of affection from a parent to a child; and yet there are many who see chiefly the severer passages. As there may be fifty or sixty nights of gentle dew in one summer, that will not cause as much remark as one hailstorm of half-an-hour; so there are those who are more struck by those passages of the Bible that announce the indignation of God than by those that announce His affection. 1. God has a mother's simplicity of instruction. A father does not know how to teach a child the A B C. Men are not skilful in the

primary department. But a mother has so much patience that she will tell a child for the hundredth time the difference between F and G and between I and J. She thus teaches the child, and has no awkwardness of condescension in so doing. So God, our Mother, stoops down to our infantile minds. God has been teaching some of us thirty years, and some sixty years, one word of one syllable, and we do not know it yet—f-a-i-t-h, faith. When we come to that word, we stumble, we halt, we lose our place, we pronounce it wrong. Still, God's patience is not exhausted. God, our Mother, puts us in the school of prosperity, and the letters are in sunshine, and we cannot spell them. God puts us in the school of adversity, and the letters are black, and we cannot spell them. If God were merely a king, He would punish us. If He were simply a father, He would whip us. But God is a mother, and so we are borne with and helped all the way through. A mother teaches her child chiefly by pictures. God, our Mother, teaches us almost everything by pictures. Is the Divine goodness to be set forth? How does God teach us? By an autumnal picture. The barns are full. The wheat-stacks are rounded. The orchards are dropping the ripe pippins into the lap of the farmer. Does God, our Mother, want to set forth what a foolish thing it is to go away from the right, and how glad Divine mercy is to take back the wanderer? How is it to be done? By a picture. 2. God has a mother's favouritism. A father sometimes shows a sort of favouritism. Here is a boy—strong, well, of high forehead and quick intellect. The father says, "I will take that boy into my firm yet;" or, "I will give him the very best possible education." There are instances where, for the culture of the one boy, all the others have been robbed. A sad favouritism; but that is not the mother's favourite. I will tell you her favourite. There is a child who, at two years of age, had a fall. He has never got over it. The scarlet fever muffled his hearing. He is not what he once was. The children of the family all know that he is the favourite. So he ought to be; for if there is any one in the world who needs sympathy more than another, it is an invalid child. Weary on the first mile of life's journey; carrying an aching head, a weak side, an irritated lung. So the mother ought to make him a favourite. God loves us all; but there is one weak, and sick, and sore, and wounded, and suffering, and faint. That is the one who lies nearest and more perpetually on the great, loving heart of God. There is not such a watcher as God. 3. God has a mother's capacity for attending to little hurts. The father is shocked at the broken bone of the child, or at the sickness that sets the cradle on fire with fever, but it takes the mother to sympathize with all the little ailments and little bruises of the child. If the child has a splinter in its hand, it wants the mother to take it out, and not the father. So with God our Mother: all our annoyances are important enough to look at and sympathize with. 4. God has a mother's patience for the erring. If one does wrong, first his associates in life cast him off; if he goes on in the wrong way, his business partner cuts him off; if he goes on, his best friends cast him off. But after all others have cast him off, where does he go? Who holds no grudge, and forgives the last time as well as the first? Who sits by the murderer's counsel all through the long trial? Who tarries the longest at the windows of a culprit's cell? Who, when all others think ill of a man, keeps on thinking well of him? It is his mother. 5. God has a mother's way of putting a child to sleep. You know there is no cradle-song like a mother's. The time will come when we will be wanting to be put to sleep. Then we want God to soothe us, to hush us to sleep. (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *God's motherly comfort*:—A mother comforts—1. By her presence. It is always to her children a benediction—a comfort. 2. By her love. Of a mother's love the child becomes deeply conscious as she strokes gently his fevered brow, or lifts upon him the light of her loving eyes. 3. By her food. She knows their needs and their tastes, and she gives nourishing and satisfying food. 4. By her words. There are three different kinds of experience common to men in this life which seem to require the presence of our mothers, and in each of these God has promised to be near us. 1. When troubles come. 2. When we are sick. 3. When death is nigh. (*Christian Age.*) *God both Father and Mother*:—Broadly we may state the contrast of these relations in two well-known and exceeding precious Old Testament sayings: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." The father pities, the mother comforts, her children. The father in his strength stoops in gracious kindliness to succour them in their need; the mother holds them in a warm, eager embrace to comfort them in their pain. So we

come to speak amongst ourselves of the father's hand, but always of the mother's arms. The father leads by the hand; the mother soothes and carries in her arms. Jesus did both. He was in His own person the perfect revelation at once of the Father-God and the Mother-God. He took God's little ones up into His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them—blessed them with the double blessing of hand and arms. We find it easy to speak of the Almighty Father, but we are conscious of a dissonance of thought in saying the Almighty Mother. Almightiness is not an attribute of motherhood. But "everlastingness" is; and the "everlasting arms" are the arms of the Mother-God. There is, therefore, the rare insight of truth as well as rich beauty and pathos in Isaiah's imagery, "As one whom his mother comforteth." The glorious prophecies of evangelical blessedness which Isaiah proclaimed had reached their close. The final results to faithful and unfaithful of the revelation of the grace of God mingle in the last two chapters. As we read especially lxv. 17–25 and lxvi. 10–13, we feel that this figure of the Motherhood of God touches the climax of the writing. The prophet's swift imagery halts here. It has no farther flight. The evolution of a mother is the vanishing-point in nature and art, where human comfort melts away into the infinite comfort of the Divine. (*F. Platt.*) *The Mother-God in Scripture:*—Several great Oriental scholars believe that in the earliest times the Semitic religions had a goddess, but no god. The matriarchal state of society came before the patriarchal. Whatever historic value this opinion may have, there can be little doubt, to a careful reader, that much of the Old Testament imagery and poetry, which seek to cheer the hearts of men with promises of Divine comfort, can be best realized as we read into them the idea of the Motherhood of God. There is a New Testament reference to those wilderness ways in which the children of God were led in ancient days which at least suggests a lingering recognition of this idea. The margin of Acts xiii. 18 reads—and the reading has considerable support: "About the time of forty years He bore or fed them as a nurse beareth or feedeth her child." Much more definite, however, is Deut. xxxii. 11: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him." We scarcely need to remind ourselves that it is the mother-eagle that fluttereth over her young, and beareth them in safety on her broad pinions whither she will. A similar fidelity to nature should always be borne in mind that we may interpret the inner meaning of the well-known psalms of comfort, which tell us of a hiding-place and a refuge beneath the shadow of God's wings, or under the covering of His feathers (Ps. xviii. 8; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; xci. 1–4). It is of course the mother-bird that gathers her brood under her wings, and hides them in warmth and safety beneath her fluffy feathers. Nor can we ever forget that when our Lord was leaving the great city of human sorrow He had yearned in vain to comfort, when He strove in His anguish of weeping to leave some picture in the mind of her people of the infinite wealth of the Divine tenderness of comfort to which they had been blind, the passion of the great mother-soul within Him could find no more perfect imagery than that familiar to them and their fathers in the psalmists of Israel: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" All nature is plaintive with an instinctive mother-cry, from the bleating cry of the lost lamb to the lonely cry of the lost child of the Mother-God. And instinct should count for something in interpreting the God whose children we are. The lad dying of fever in some rude, rough shanty at the gold diggings, or tossing in thirst in the hospital of a far-off foreign port, cries in his delirium for his mother. It is his deepest instinct. It was always his mother's touch which brought coolness to his brow, and his mother's voice that had a witchery of comfort in its whisper in the old village home. And in that other sickness of the mind, in the soul's day of fever and fret, it is a true spiritual instinct we obey as our lonely or wearied spirits cry aloud for the arms of the Mother-God. (*Ibid.*) *Paul's conception of the Motherhood of God:*—There are glimpses here and there in the writings of St. Paul, revealed by subtle delicacies of speech, which more than suggest that the Motherhood of God was a flitting presence of grace and tenderness in his thought. We recall how when he wrote to the Thessalonian Church, he turned for a time from ministering the needed tonic of rebuke to the sweeter ministry of the comfort of hope. Our version reads: "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." St. Paul wrote: "Them also which have been laid to sleep by Jesus will God bring with Him." "Laid to sleep by Jesus."

There is a picture in the words—a homely and familiar one. The day is done. The tiny feet of children, which all day long have pattered to and fro within the home, are tired. As the darkness falls their prattle grows drowsy. Then they are hushed to sleep in the mother's arms, and laid in their cradle-bed until morning. We see it all. We are God's children of an older growth. While it is called day we spend our strength in toils and journeyings. As the shadows lengthen we grow aweary. It is time to rest. In the arms of the Mother-God, who stoops over us in the Saviour's condescending ways, we are put to sleep, and laid in stillness to rest "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Perhaps even more literally than we thought, our dead "die into the arms of God." (*Ibid.*) *The Motherhood of God:*—There are old lessons of the love of God we may learn in a fresh light as we interpret them through the thought of the Motherhood of God. 1. The intensity of the Divine self-sacrifice grows keener through it. All love gives itself, but its climax of self-renunciation is motherhood. 2. The sense of the inalienableness of the Divine love is deepened also by the thought of the Motherhood of God. Does a mother's love ever die? When every other love expires, it lives its secret life. Its patience is infinite. A mother may forget. Her motherhood may prove false. But it is not likely. It is the most unnatural thing in nature. It is as if the sun should rise in the west, and set in the east. A lioness will fight to the death for her whelps, and the she-bear for her cubs. It is the first and last instinct creation knows. But let nature have denied herself, let her have given the lie to her primal instincts, let the stars have gone backward in their courses, and all the settled order of the universe have returned to chaos, yet even then, saith the Lord, will I not forget thee. 3. Possibly also the Divine yearning over the wayward and prodigal may find a fresh setting in the idea of the Motherhood of God. When a father's love does not easily forgive, because his sense of justice and order and true discipline in the family, of which he is the responsible governor, are hindrances, the mother's love deviseth prevailing persuasions, and intercedes with tears. And in unknown depths of a common love of the prodigal the justice and the mercy somehow meet and are reconciled. Evangelical theologians are ever conscious of two elements in the character of God, whose nature and whose name is Love. The law of righteousness and the ministry of mercy are always present. And the problem of their reconciliation is the problem so much profound and noble thought has striven to solve in the doctrine of atonement. They are both true. The Lord our God is one God; but He is Father-God and Mother-God. We wonder at times whether the prodigal son of our Lord's parable had a mother. It is not difficult to suggest reasons why, in an Oriental country, where the position of woman is so different from her place in our own, the father's love should wisely be Christ's type of the Divine. But there is a fragment of further meaning hidden in the story for those who remember that the prodigal may not have been motherless. Certain it is that, if his father climbed to the house-top to gaze expectant in the direction of the far country, his mother crept into her chamber alone to pray. As the father commands, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him," the mother's eyes are homes of silent tears. And who shall say that the rejoicing of the home-coming was not tenderer in the mother's heart, and that tender joy the last balm of healing to the prodigal son? (*Ibid.*) *The craving for the feminine in God:*—The Rev. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren")—he told me the story himself—was once in a Roman Catholic church in Italy. Before the altar to the Virgin knelt a woman, her lips moving devoutly in prayer, her eyes alight with wondering worship and love. As she was making her way to the door, after ending her devotion, Dr. Watson asked her in Italian some question about the points of interest in the building. The woman seemed pleased to find an English visitor (or perhaps I should say a Scot) who could converse in her own language, and the two fell to chatting about the scenery and show-places of the neighbourhood. By and by the conversation turned upon the differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant religions, especially in regard to the fact that Protestants do not address prayers to the Virgin. "Don't you ever pray to the Mother of God?" she asked. "No," said Dr. Watson, very gently, "for it seems to me that all you find which is holy and helpful and adorable in the character of that most revered and beautiful of women—all that, and infinitely more, I find in her Divine Son." "Yes, sir," she said, wistfully. "I understand that for you, but you see you are a man, and you don't know how a woman needs a woman to pray to." "And although I should be the last man in the world ever to become a Roman Catholic," said Dr. Watson, when telling the story, "you'll believe me when I assure you that I hadn't the heart to add another word."

(*Coulson Kernahan.*) "*As one whom his mother comforteth*":—At a summer resort a clergyman and a lady sat on the piazza of the hotel. The lady's heart was heavily burdened, and she talked of her sorrows to the aged minister, who tried to lead her in her hour of need to the Great Comforter. His efforts seemed to be in vain; the lady had heard all her life of the promise that if a tired soul casts its burden on the Lord it will be sustained, no matter how heavy that burden may be, but she seemed to lack the faith to thus cast herself upon the Lord. A half-hour afterward a severe thunderstorm came up in the western sky. With the first flash of lightning the mother jumped out of her chair and ran up and down the piazza, exclaiming: "Where is Freddie? Where is Freddie? He is so terribly frightened in a thunderstorm I don't know what he will do without me." In a few moments afterward her boy came running up the walk, almost breathless, and his face plainly showing the great fear that was in his heart. "Oh, mother," he exclaimed, "I was so frightened, I ran just as fast as ever I could to get to you." The mother sat down and took the frightened child into her arms. She allayed his fear and quieted him, until his head rested calmly on her loving heart. The good clergyman stepped up gently, and, putting his hand on the mother's shoulder, he whispered: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "I understand it now," she replied, as she looked up with tearful face. "I will throw myself into His arms as a little child, and remember His promise. I never felt the depth of Divine love as shown in that promise before." (*Susan T. Perry.*) *A mother's self-sacrificing love*:—In the buried city of Pompeii, that was destroyed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, I was shown a place where had been found the remains of a lady and her three children. She had tried to gather two of her little ones in her arms, and the babe was hid on her breast in the folds of her robe. And when the scorching dust came down, every one fled; but the mother could not leave her children, and she died with them. A mother would give her own life to save her child. The Lord is as a mother. He did die to save you! And He now lives to comfort you as a mother comforteth her child. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 14. **The hand of the Lord shall be known toward His servants.**—*The Lord's hand revealed*:—I. SOME OF THE WAYS THE HAND OF THE LORD MAKES ITSELF KNOWN TOWARDS HIS SERVANTS. 1. In the character they bear. 2. In the work they do. 3. In the sufferings they endure. 4. In all the triumphs of their faith and patience. II. THE CONDITION OF THIS VISIBLE DISPLAY OF GOD'S POWER. Simply to let it operate upon us and through us. We can, and often do, prevent His hand from being known. There must be humble receptiveness, believing prayer. III. THE EFFECTS OF THIS MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD'S HAND. 1. It encourages the Lord's servants. 2. It rebukes the unbelief of the ungodly. Conclusion: Unconverted sinner! the Lord desires to show forth the power of His grace in you. Will you not allow Him to work upon you this miracle of His saving power? (*W. Guthrie, M.A.*)

Vers. 18–24. **It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues.**—*The conversion of the world*:—I. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF PROVIDENCE RESPECTING THE GLORIOUS WORK OF THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD TO CHRIST. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH IT SHALL BE ACCOMPLISHED. III. THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT SHALL REACH. IV. THE HOLY AND BLESSED EFFECTS WHICH SHALL BE PRODUCED BY IT. (*J. Snodgrass, D.D.*) *The Gospel to be preached to the uncivilized*:—No regard seems here to be paid to that favourite maxim with many, that the Gospel can only be successfully preached to a people already in a civilized state. It is certain that the first preaching of the Gospel to the nations of the world was not conducted upon any such narrow principle. On the contrary, it is mentioned by some of the early apologists for Christianity, as one of its honourable achievements, that it has turned even the most cruel and barbarous people into mildness and docility. If any intimation is given, in prophecy, upon this point, it seems rather to reverse the above-mentioned maxim. Were Pul and Lud, and Tubal and Tarshish, civilized countries in the days of this prophet? yet God is represented as sending messengers to them, to declare His glory among the Gentiles. Is there a more unfavourable manner of life for receiving instruction than that of a people wandering about, without any fixed residence? or is there any state of society more base than that of men living in caves and rocks of the earth? yet the glad tidings of the Gospel will make the villages, or clustered tents, of Kedar to rejoice, and the inhabitants of the rock to sing. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 19. And I will set a sign among them.—*Missions:*—I. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE NATIONS WERE TO BE GATHERED INTO THE CHURCH OF GOD. II. THE INSTRUMENTS TO BE EMPLOYED IN EFFECTING THIS GREAT WORK. (*R. Macculloch.*) *Tarshish . . . Javan:*—That is, to far Spain, and the distances of Africa, towards the Black Sea, and to Greece, a full round of the compass. (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *"The isles afar off":*—Coastlands (chap. xl. 15). This distinction between the nearer nations who have experienced something of the greatness of Jehovah through contact with His people Israel, and the remoter nations who have not heard His name, originates with the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. xxxviii. f.). But while the distinction is common to the two prophets, the development of the idea is strikingly different. In Ezekiel Gog's ignorance of Jehovah tempts him to an act of sacrilege on the land of Israel which is avenged by the annihilation of him and his host. The spirit of this passage is more evangelical. Jehovah sends missionaries from the nearer nations to those who have not heard His fame nor seen His glory; and the report carries conviction to their minds, so that they restore the Israelites exiled amongst them, as an offering to the Lord. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) **And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.**—*Missionary responsibility:*—I. THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WHO KNOW NOT GOD. 1. Their present state. They know nothing of the God of love. The weary and heavy-laden among them never heard Christ's "Come unto Me." The sorrowful among them never heard His "Blessed are they that mourn." They know nothing of the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Strengthener, although their need is as urgent as ours, of comfort and of strength. They do not know what prayer is. They do but send up deprecations to demons. They, as we, are bereaved of dear ones; but the grand music of those words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," never hushed the discords of their wailing, nor lifted the darkness of their silent despair. 2. Their future. All is to them wrapt in gloom impenetrable. II. OUR RESPONSIBILITY. Imagine the plague once more devastating our cities. Suppose you knew of an infallible remedy. Then suppose utter indifference on your part in imparting it. What a monster you would be! No one really loves the Lord Jesus who is not zealous to make others love Him. If you do love Him, and are anxious to make others love Him, what are you doing for the spread of His kingdom? III. WHAT CAN WE DO? We can pray for the full coming of Christ's kingdom, for the sending more labourers into the harvest. We can provoke others to pray. We can try to realize this truth, that our Lord makes the evangelization of the world to depend, in we know not what degree, upon faithful, earnest prayer. (*J. R. Vernon, M.A.*)

Ver. 21. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites.—*Taken for priests and for Levites:*—Those taken to be priests and Levites might be the Gentiles who bring back the dispersed of Israel, or the restored Israelites themselves. The latter is the more probable meaning. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) "From them" refers to the converted heathen, by whom the Israelites were brought back to their home. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) Incorporated in Jehovah's priestly Church (chap. lxi. 6), the heathen are not now excluded even from priestly and Levitical service in the temple. (*Ibid.*) *A new order of priests and Levites:*—Under the Gospel dispensation God will select both out of Jews and Gentiles a chosen people, who shall stand before Him spiritually as the priests and the Levites stood before him typically. The connection leads us to see that not only a great promise but likewise a great privilege is herein implied. It is that we shall be priests and Levites. Now, the priests or Levites were persons set apart to be God's peculiar property. Being thus set apart they lived only for Divine service. Further, they enjoyed the privilege of drawing near to God—nearer than the rest of people in that typical dispensation. In like manner there is a people to be found on earth at this day whom God has chosen to draw near unto Him. But priests and Levites had two works to do. They were engaged to do something towards God for men, and so they offered the sacrifices that were brought to the door of the tabernacle, whether according to the general ordinances, or to any special vows. Spiritually minded, they much engaged in intercession for the rest of Israel. So there is a people to be found this day who offer unto God acceptable prayer and praise, and in answer to their prayer, unnumbered blessings come down upon the sons of men. Another part of their office consisted in speaking for God to the people: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge." As for the Levites, they were as ushers in the schools and tutors in the families of Israel. Amongst the Levites were found those scribes who became the instructors of the people, the copyists of the law, and the expounders of its

statutes and ordinances; ministers who opened up to the people, as Ezra did, the knotty points of the old covenant, and expounded the Word. So, not all of us in the same degree, but all of us in a measure, are to be teachers of God's revealed truth, even as He has taught us. The great point is this. It seems to be mentioned here as a matter of surprise that God should take any of the persons here mentioned—of the sinful, backsliding, transgressing Jews, or of the blinded, dark, benighted, heathen Gentiles—and make them to be priests and Levites before Him. That is parallel to the fact that God does take some of the most unlikely persons, who seem to be the most unsuitable of all, and make these to be His faithful and honoured servants among the sons of men. I. THE FACT. According to the text, men have nothing to do with the selection; for it is said, "I will also take of them"—not, "their parents shall bring them up to it;" not, "those who shall be looked out as the most fit and proper men on account of some natural bent and bias, or gift and talent," but, "I will take." God's priesthood in the world is a priesthood of His own choosing, of His own setting apart, of His own anointing. "He hath made us kings and priests unto God." In their case, it appears that whatever was unfit in their character has been overcome by Divine grace. If God takes them for Levites, He makes them Levites; if He chooses them for priests, He makes them priests. II. THE REASON OF THE FACT. Does not He do this to display His infinite mercy? And His power? And His sovereignty? Does He not thereby secure to Himself the most loving service? Another reason why the Lord takes the vilest of men to make them the saintliest is, that He might openly triumph over Satan. And do not you think this is done very much for the encouragement of the Church of God? III. WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM THIS? Remember what state you were in before God's grace took you in hand. Then consider what you are called to be; you are made priests and Levites. Then ask yourself what you would soon become if His grace were to depart from you. And what humility this vocation of God should produce! However high we may be raised, we must remember whence the honour cometh. And since He hath taken us for priests and for Levites, let us do every office heartily as unto the Lord. Let us serve Him with great thankfulness and joy. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 22. **For as the new heavens and the new earth.**—*The perpetuity of the true Israel:*—The bulk of the heathen world and also of Israel perish, but Israel's name and seed, *i.e.* Israel as a nation with the same ancestors and an independent name, remains for ever (cf. Jer. xxxi. 35 f.; xxxiii. 20–26), as the new heaven and the new earth. And just because Israel's calling in regard to the heathen world is now fulfilled and all things are made new, the old fencing off of Israel from the heathen now comes to an end; and what qualifies for priestly and Levitical service in God's temple is no longer mere natural descent, but inner nobility. . . . The prophet thus represents to himself the Church of the future on a new earth and under a new heaven; but he is unable to represent the eternal in the form of eternity; he represents it to himself merely as an unending continuation of temporal history (ver. 23). (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *A figure of the spiritual:*—The thought of chap. lvi. 7 is here (ver. 23) expressed by a figure, which, understood literally, involves a physical impossibility; but the prophet cannot altogether emancipate himself from the forms of the Jewish economy, and clothes a spiritual truth in a garb which in strictness is too narrow for it (cf. Zech. xiv. 16–19). (*Prof. S. R. Driver, D.D.*) *The stability of the Christian Church* (with chap. lx. 20, 21):—The Christian Church is not the conqueror of the Jewish polity, but the heir and successor. The new covenant has been developed out of the old. There was no break when Christ came, but a fulfilment and a completion. And so the promises were handed down in the Christian line, among which these from the latter part of Isaiah, relating to the "stability" of the ancient Church, are not the least remarkable. They declare that God is an "everlasting" light to His people, that their permanence is like the permanence of the creation of God. (*T. D. Woolsey.*) *The Christian Church not a human institution:*—The permanence of the Christian Church in the world, if it be a fact, is unlike all facts of history. Everything human decays and passes away. All institutions, forms of government, civilizations, have their day and decline. No one doubts that the old religions of India and its castes are doomed to perish. We cannot, therefore, be assured from history that Christianity may not perish also. Still when you look at its origin, its power of growth, its vitality, when everything around was dead; its changes of form joined to unchangeableness of principle; its power to correct evils within its pale; its predominance among the

influences that act on mankind; its universal character, and its consciousness—so to speak—that the world is its own, you cannot feel it to be otherwise than quite probable that it is to be man's guide to the end of time. (*Ibid.*) *The history of the Church augurs its permanence:*—Though history is not prophecy, though it cannot with authority predict the universal and final sway of Christ's Gospel and of Christian institutions, it reveals, at the least, a working power, a tenacity of life, a hopefulness, a benevolent energy which are not inconsistent with stability and with continuance until the end of time. (*Ibid.*) *The stability of the Christian Church:*—I. WE SHALL LOOK AT SEVERAL CAUSES TO WHICH IT IS NOT DUE, but to which, on a superficial view, it might be ascribed. 1. It is not owing to strength borrowed from governments, the Church grew without help from the government; it grew also in spite of long efforts of the government to destroy it. 2. Nor is the stability of the Church due to the stability of its forms of discipline and order. These have passed through a great variety of changes, from the times of the nascent Church, when there was little of established order, down through the ages of hierarchy, to our times, when the Church thrives in a great variety of forms, and with varied theories of government. 3. Nor yet is the stability of the Church owing to the stability of theological systems. It grew, it almost reigned, before any received dogmatic statements of its sacred truth were current. It has outlived theories and expositions innumerable, and indeed nothing connected with Christianity has been more changing than the scientific arrangements of its truths. 4. Nor can the stability of the Church be explained by saying that it got the control of opinion and kept thought in leading strings, so that when science was emancipated, new conditions full of danger to the Church began. It arose in spite of a reigning heathen opinion and philosophy, which it overthrew and put another in the place. It has in its healthiest state favoured all knowledge in the confidence of being itself together with every other true thing from God. 5. Nor can the stability of the Church be attributed to the condescending patronage of large-minded men, who saw in its justice and humanity a help for the world to be found nowhere else, but yet did not believe in it themselves. II. TO WHAT, THEN, IS THE STABILITY OF THE CHURCH DUE? To this question it is no sufficient answer that the Holy Spirit is ever in and with the Church. For the Spirit's office is to act on men according to the laws of character by Divine realities. It is due—1. To this: that the Gospel, on which the Church is built, works out some of the great problems which lie on the heart of man, in a way to give lasting peace and satisfaction to the soul. I refer to practical rather than to intellectual problems, although even the restless questionings of the mind either meet with an answer from the Divine oracles, or are carried up into a higher realm of truth. The power inherent in Christianity itself, as a way of reconciling God and man, and of raising man above sin by great truths and great hopes, is a real and permanent power. It is suited to all natures and capacities, to all races and times. 2. To those permanent features of the Gospel, which bind men together in a brotherhood pervaded by the spirit of love and fellowship. 3. To its self-reforming capacity. The human and the Divine have ever mingled and will ever mingle in the historical progress of Christianity, as they mingle in the development of a Christian life. There are unavoidable sources of corruption in the revolutions of society, in the growth of wealth, in the love of self-gratification, in the increase of worldly comforts. There are other sources in the ignorance of untrained Christians, in the ambition of the clergy and their love of dominion, in the rewards offered within the Church to the aspiring, in formalism, in a dead orthodoxy. At the lowest ebb of Christian life and knowledge there remain within the reach of the Church the sources of a better spiritual state, so that it can reform itself as it has done more than once. (1) As long as the Bible is acknowledged as an authority, there is an appeal to it from all other authorities, from popes, and councils, and philosophers, and the current opinion of the time. (2) There are at the times of greatest declension men who are somehow led, as we believe, by the Divine Spirit concurring with the Word, into a deeper experience; they rise above their times, they reach convictions which are irrepressible, they must proclaim to the world at any cost what they found out as the resting-places of their souls; they become the starting-points of a reform which sweeps over all Christian nations. 4. The stability of the Church is ensured by the stability of Christ. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." Doubt is of to-day, but He is of all time. He is a permanent possession for the soul. He does not wear out in a lifetime. He is the permanent possession of the Church in all its ages and changes. He does not wear out while there are men to long for redemption. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 24. And they shall go forth.—*Transgressors punished:*—Those that transgressed or "rebelled" against the Lord are the obstinate idolaters referred to in chaps. lxv., lxvi. Their carcasses lie a spectacle to all who come up to worship at Jerusalem, subject to never-ending corruption and never-ending burning. According to the prophet's conception, the scene takes place on the earth, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, probably in the Valley of Hinnom, but the language may have suggested a punishment by everlasting fire in the world to come. (*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*) *Gehenna:*—This verse is the basis of the later Jewish conception of Gehenna as the place of everlasting punishment (see Salmond's "Christian Doctrine of Immortality"). Gehenna is the Hebrew *Gê-Hinnôm* (Valley of Hinnom), the place where, of old, human sacrifices were offered to Moloch, and for this reason desecrated by King Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 10). Afterwards it became a receptacle for filth and refuse, and Rabbinical tradition asserts that it was the custom to cast out unclean corpses there, to be burned or to undergo decomposition. This is, in all probability, the scene which had imprinted itself on the imagination of the writer, and which was afterwards projected into the unseen world as an image of endless retribution. The Talmudic theology locates the mouth of hell in the Valley of Hinnom. (*Prof. J. Skinner, D.D.*) *The eternal imaged by the temporal:*—The prophet blends temporal and eternal. This world and the next coalesce to his view. (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*) *Hell* is of both worlds, so that in the same essential sense, although in different degree, it may be said both of him who is still living but accursed, and of him who perished centuries ago, that his worm dieth not and his fire is not quenched. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Doom following unfaithfulness and transgression:*—1. It is a terrible ending, but it is the same as upon the same floor Christ set to His teaching—the Gospel net cast wide, but only to draw in both good and bad upon a beach of judgment; the wedding feast thrown open and men compelled to come in, but among them a heart whom grace so great could not awe even to decency; Christ's Gospel preached, His example evident, and Himself owned as Lord, and nevertheless some whom neither the hearing nor the seeing nor the owning with their lips did lift to unselfishness or stir to pity. Therefore He who had cried, "Come all unto Me," was compelled to close by saying to many, "Depart." 2. It is a terrible ending, but one only too conceivable. For though God is love, man is free—free to turn from that love; free to be as though he had never felt it; free to put away from himself the highest, clearest, most urgent grace that God can show. But to do this is the judgment. 3. "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The Lord did not answer the question but by bidding the questioner take heed to himself: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." (*Prof. G. A. Smith, D.D.*) *Eternal punishment:*—I. THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED. II. ITS PUNISHMENT. Certain. Terrible. Without alleviation or hope. III. THE PERPETUATION OF ITS MORAL LESSONS. (*J. Lyth, D.D.*) *The goodness and severity of God:*—The public reading of the synagogue repeats once more after ver. 24, on account of its terrible import, the encouraging words of ver. 23, "in order to conclude with words of comfort." (*F. Delitzsch, D.D.*)

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